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In this issue

EDITORIAL

Belarus: a Second-tier Partner of EU?

By Kiryl Kascian and Hanna Vasilevich

With regard to the region Belarus belongs to, the last months of 2013 were dominated by the third Eastern Partnership summit that took place on November 28-29 in Vilnius. This event was thought to become a determining to confirm "progress in political association and economic integration with Eastern Partnership countries by finalizing association agreements including the establishment of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area". Indeed, it was initially expected that the highlight of the summit would be signing of the association agreement with Ukraine. In case of Armenia, Georgia and Moldova it was expected that these countries would initiate such agreements. So, the planned or actual existence of the association agreements were seen as a sort of pale that marks progress in the EU relations with the countries of the Eastern Partnership initiative. Accordingly, Belarus and Azerbaijan were located beyond this pale.

In sport terms such a division resembles a two-tier league where the "champions" who were about to initiate or sign the association agreement are delegated to the higher tier, while those lacking it – to the second tier. According to this, interest in these countries during the Vilnius summit was measured. In other words, during the event in Vilnius all three countries were expected to have a sort of ranking which determined public interest in them – the highest attention was pointed to Ukraine, then to Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, and then to Azerbaijan and Belarus. Thus, should the most "pro-European" statement with regard to the development of their relations and readiness for further tangible progress in negotiations with the European Union come from Azerbaijan or Belarus, it would hardly exceed public attention to the "top tier".

Beyond any doubt the European Union was interesting in engaging four countries of the "first tier" by means of initiating and signing the association agreements respectively. Such a scenario would confirm the effectiveness of the current format of the Eastern Partnership, particularly with regard to the establishment of a free trade area with these countries. However, the real development of the situation proved to be different from that expected by the European Union.

The results of the summit were much less promising for the EU than declared. Armenia refused to initiate an association agreement which put the previously conducted negotiations off the agenda and in sport terms "relegated" this country to the second tier of Eastern Partnership. The decision of Ukrainian authorities to postpone the signing of the association agreement with the EU could currently be seen as the bitterest failure of the Eastern Partnership. This decision and its outcomes produced many effects that since its announcement have dominated the news from Eastern Europe. Thus, initiation of the association agreements with Georgia and Moldova can be seen only to a very limited degree as a success of the EU foreign policy.

Against this political background the announcement of the Belarusian foreign minister Uladzimir Makei on Belarus' readiness to start negotiations on simplifying the visa regime with the European Union did not attract much public attention.

One can interpret the essence of this statement from different perspectives. On one hand, it embodies the "pragmatic approach" of Belarusian authorities declared already by Makei's predecessor Siarhei Martynau. Additionally, regardless of political reasons behind this move by Belarusian authorities, they can be seen as a positive development since its apparent practical outcome could serve an example when formula 'at least something is better than nothing' has positive meaning.

On the other hand, the relegation of Belarus to the Eastern Partnership's "second tier" predetermined the outcomes of this statement. For the EU there existed much more urgent things related to the failure with the Union's engaging with Ukraine. In other words, Ukrainian issue started dominating the entire discourse on the Eastern Partnership immediately after the decision of the Ukrainian authorities was announced. Neither initiation of the association agreements with Georgia and Moldova, nor Armenia's refuse to do so, nor the declaration of the Belarusian authorities to start visa liberalization negotiations have had even a chance to dismiss the primacy of the Ukrainian issue both on the political agenda and in the news. The Ukrainian issue was portrayed within the context of the Russian factor and involvement in the Eastern Partnership. There is no need to repeat numerous interpretations of the situation around the Ukraine's decision to postpone signing the association agreement. It is however necessary to draw attention to the Belarusian context.

First, Belarus' currently belonging to the EaP "second-tier" would likely keep the current status quo in the country's relations with the EU. It means that in the current situation Belarus would merely remain out of EAP's top priorities , while the EaP itself would most likely remain out of the EU foreign policy priorities for at least two consequent Presidencies of the Council of the European Union (Greek and Italian).

Second, as the Ukrainian situation showed, the Belarus-EU relations will remain in the "shadow" of Russian factor. The Belarusian situation however significantly differs from the Ukrainian one due to Belarus' membership in the Russian-centered Customs Union. Put into the "Ukrainian" framework, it means that Belarus'rapprochement with the EU will be closely observed by Russia without any obstacle until it does not interfere into the Russian geopolitical interests and until it fits Russia's own agenda on rapprochement with the EU. However, if it ever comes to the establishment of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area between Belarus and the EU, Moscow would immediately intervene to put the framework of such agreement in compliance with the realities of the Customs Union.

Hence, on one hand Belarus has never been a member of the EaP "top tier", as the EU conditionality was merely inconsistent with the "pragmatic approach" declared by the Belarusian authorities. On the other hand, the EU itself was not able to present a clearly formulated agenda that could engage official Minsk into closer rapprochement and eventually contribute to the political liberalization of the country. Finally, as the Ukrainian situation has proven, the EU is ineffective in counterbalancing growing geopolitical appetites of Putin's Russia in the EU Eastern Partnership area.

Concept of the issue

The Third Eastern Partnership Summit which took place on November 28-29 in Vilnius was thought to become a milestone for the further development of the region of which Belarus is a part. It has actually become such a milestone, even though in a totally different way than initially expected. The political developments in the region during and after the Summit were centered on the situation in Ukraine which was about to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. The last moment decision of the Ukrainian authorities to postpone this step triggered massive protests in the Ukrainian society which are still continuing. The decision of Ukrainian authorities, its reasons and aftermath has already produced large number of different interpretations by thousands of commentators throughout the world. Not focusing on any of those interpretations we can merely confirm two obvious observations. First, the involvement of Putin's Russia in the post-Soviet space has been significantly increasing and proved to be effective at least in the short-term perspective. Second, the situation in Ukraine put the public attention away from all more or less significant events in all countries of the region, including Belarus.

In the situation determined by our second observation we decided to make the state of Belarusian studies main focus of this issue of *Belarusian Review*, whilst in covering Belarus-related politics to concentrate only on the events of the Vilnius summit, its aftermath and consequences for a wider regional perspective.

The "political" section of this issue starts with the editorial by Kiryl Kascian and Hanna Vasilevich *Belarus: a second-tier partner of the EU?*— where they focus on outcomes of the Vilnius summit concerning Belarus.

In his article *Ukraine: between "High Society" EU and "Elder Brother" Russia* Kiryl Kascian discusses why, despite Ukraine's decision to defer the signing of the association agreement with the EU, what is being called geopolitical or civilizational choice of Ukraine is in fact the country's attempt to make decisions on its own without obsessive mentoring from "the elder brother".

The text Eastern Partnership's Bilateral "Multilateralism" by David Erkomaishvili argues that the outcomes of the Vilnius summit have revealed inaccuracies in the Eastern Partnership initiative's design. Yet any further progress within the EPI or its alternatives requires a major revision of the EU's perception of the post-Soviet space.

Pavel Usov comments the declaration of Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makei on the country's readiness to begin negotiations on simplifying the visa regime with the European Union.

The texts focused on Belarusian studies and offered to our readership raise many different issues. In his text *It Is No Time for National Interests: the Jamestown Foundation Defends Dictatorial Lukashenka* Valery Kavaleuski describes the panel "Engaging Belarus: A Fresh Perspective" organized by the Jamestown Foundation in Washington, DC, on October 28, 2013 in which Grigory Ioffe and Vladimir Socor took part. The author outlines remarks by the panelists, the main message of whom was that Belarus allegedly has an identity problem, and offers his observations regarding the course of the conversation.

This text is followed by the one entitled *Engagement with Belarus and the Lukashenka Factor* by David R. Marples who, while commenting on the attitudes of Jamestown panelists, focuses on more basic questions concerning Belarusian identity and historical past.

A French scholar of Belarusian descent Virginie Symaniec in her text *Belarusian Studies in France: a Lost Cause?* discusses the current situation with the Belarusian studies in the French academia.

A well-known Latvian historian Ēriks Jēkabsons offers an overview of the current state of studies of Belarusians' history in Latvia supplemented by a comprehensive list of bibliography.

Andrzej Tichomirow addresses the role of West-Rus'ism ideology in the politics of memory in contemporary Belarus.

Curt Woolhiser, a famous expert in Slavic languages, in his text discusses the bilingual situation in Belarus arguing that a common misconception among foreigners traveling to Belarus is that they don't even need to bother to learn any Belarusian.

The Third International Congress of Belarusian Studies was held in Kaunas on 11-13 October, 2013. It proved to be the main academic event focused on Belarusian Studies and attracted many well-known scholars from over 20 countries. For the third time *Belarusian Review* was a partner of the Congress. In this issue we present a number of texts devoted to this event.

In his article *Evaluating the 19th century history during the Kaunas Congress: is it topical?* Andrzej Tichomirow reports on the work of the Congress section entitled "*Belarus as Part of the Russian Empire. Belarusians as a Minority and Diaspora in the 20th-21st Centuries*".

A Polish scholar of Belarusian ethnicity Dorota Michaluk in her interview shares her impressions from the Congress.

In this issue we also would like to announce the launch of our new project that is to be embodied in the form of a special issue of *Belarusian Review* devoted to the world of Belarusian Jews. This project is based on the results of the work of the section devoted to Jews at the Third Congress of Belarusian Studies. It is initiated by our colleagues and contributing editors Zachar Šybieka and Leonid Smilovitsky from the University of Tel Aviv.

In his text The Patroness of Palessie can return home Professor Adam Maldzis addresses the issue of the return of Belarusian valuables to Belarus — using the example of the icon of Our Lady of Juravičy.

Recently, on December 7, Radzim Harecki celebrated his 85th anniversary. In this issue we present the article *To reach a Belarusian Belarus* prepared by the Press Center of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna" in which Mr. Harecki tells about his life, activities and his road to Belarus.

In this issue we would also like to draw the attention of our readers to additional two matters.

The first one is the English translation of the novel *Down among the Fishes* by a well-known contemporary Belarusian writer and journalist Natalka Babina — recently published by Glagoslav Publications.

The second one is the initiative *Belarusian Dream Theater* — an international event of performing arts — supporting freedom of expression in Belarus. It was conceived and initiated by Brendan McCall, Artistic Director of Ensemble Free Theater Norway.

Finally, we would like to draw attention of our readership to the initiative by David.R.Marples, who started a new blog site on current politics in Belarus. It is available on **http://belaruspoliticsdot.com.wordpress.com.** The main goal of this site is to keep Belarus alive and prominent in Western discussions and perspectives. The blog begins by reprinting the article *Engagement with Belarus and the Lukashenka Factor* from this issue of *Belarusian Review.*

We hope our readers will find much useful information in this issue of our journal. We will welcome your feedback, comments and observations.

FEATURES

No Time for National Interests: Jamestown Foundation Defends Dictatorial Lukashenka

By Valery Kavaleŭski

The Jamestown Foundation located in Washington, DC, held a panel on October 28, 2013, "Engaging Belarus: A Fresh Perspective". It turned out to be a special event. This article briefly outlines remarks by the panelists and offers some observations regarding the course of the conversation.

Names of Grigory Ioffe and Vladimir Socor in the panel indicated that the discussion will be critical rather of the Western approaches towards Belarus than of Lukashenka's authoritarian practices. The Embassy of Belarus to the U.S. was involved in the event with the Charge d'Affaires Oleg Kravchenko present but not speaking and a state-run TV crew filming the discussion and attendees.

The panel also included Ambassador of Latvia to the U.S. Andris Razans, research specialist from the Congressional Research Service (CRS) Steven Woehrel, and U.S. business representatives. The businessmen gave stump speeches about exciting perspectives and excellent conditions for doing business in Belarus. They recited official chamber-of-commerce statistics and reminded that Belarus used to be an assembly plant of the Soviet Union. One of them – a Washington, DC lawyer David Baron is a co-chairman of Belarus-U.S. business cooperation council. In ten days Baron met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei in Minsk.

Socor was vast in his remarks. His statements were contradictory along the premise that Lukashenka is a guarantor of economic sovereignty, a popular leader that effectively confronts Russia, but Belarusian sovereignty is fragile and therefore the West must support him. Russia is guilty for luring Belarus with lucrative offers of cheap energy, in return coercing it to accept Russian military bases. Russia staged December 19, 2010 provocations to push Belarusian authorities to repressions. Nevertheless, Belarusian leader can't be ostracized and the calls for regime change must be stopped.

Government of Belarus is legitimate but in a different way, its legitimacy based on a social contract. Socor directly implied fraudulent elections saying that the numbers were exaggerated but still the popularity of Lukashenka is very high. In his opinion, Belarusians have underdeveloped national awareness. After all, Belarus was just a territory with population that hardly saw itself different from Russia.

Recommendations on engaging Belarus obviously repeated talking points of the official Minsk. Some of them were surprising:

Decouple human rights promotion from the regime change agenda.

Strengthen institutional capacity of Belarusian government.

Develop viable interlocutors in Belarus, as the opposition is helpless.

Increase investments in Belarus.

Stop dialogue with civil society and start dialogue with the authorities.

Include Belarus in the Bologna process.

Offer European assistance regarding energy efficiency.

Offer visa facilitation for Belarusians.

Proceed with agreements on cooperation with NATO.

Belarus needs an agreement with an American company on shale gas and shale oil exploration.

Ioffe played lightly with data, facts and numbers from polls. He did not use names and once even referred to a "trusted source":

Minsk based think tank funded by the West released survey based report according to which 70 % of Belarusians find it acceptable to merge their country into a single state with Russia if this would improve the economic situation. It is hard to imagine any other state whose citizens would be willing to lose statehood in exchange for economic improvement.

Throughout his speech Ioffe was pointedly opinionated and judgmental:

The pivotal problem with Belarus is shaping distinctive national identity. Two major ideas of Belarusian history: GDL (Grand Duchy of Lithuania) and being a distinct part of Russia's cultural realm. Almost like Austrians in Austria but certainly not like Basques in Spain. […] Most Belarusians simply did not embrace a collective identity. […] When moving to cities or moving up socially Belarusians disposed of their vernacular and mastered either Russian or Polish and embraced corresponding national causes. Why? "Belarusian vernaculars" in the eyes of Belarusians were considered a stigma. […] In Belarus native language does not play a consolidating identity-building role. Language divides Belarusians not unites them.

Expressing long standing irritation of the anti-Belarusian authorities:

Western Embassies should more actively use Russian language as a predominant means of communication in Belarus. They can't be more Belarusian than Belarusians themselves.

Dire situation of human rights in Belarus has simple explanation:

Belarusian authoritarianism is culturally embedded much like Russian and even more so. […] Democracy and human right are not among priorities of Belarusians. I am an academic, and I do not care.

The Ambassador of Latvia was very vague in his remarks, but the main idea was that Latvia would like to do more for Belarus as its neighbor but it has to follow common EU foreign policy. The conditions for the engagement are well known, among them release of political prisoners and abolition of death penalty in Belarus.

The CRS researcher repeated the official position of the U.S. government regarding the situation in Belarus and expressed doubts that any change in U.S. policy towards Belarus is possible before the human rights situation improves.

During Q&A session attendees loudly protested against offensive remarks of Ioffe and Socor about Belarusian identity and language and noted that the panel includes six speakers none of whom was an ethnic Belarusian. The panel could blame Russia for events of December 19, but it was Lukashenka who imprisoned and tortured politicians and activists and made many of his critics leave the country under fear of persecution. There is no dialogue in Belarus and all decisions are made by Lukashenka without any regard for public opinion. The controversial project to construct nuclear power plant is an ongoing example of suppressing Belarusian public opinion on this serious issue.

Speakers were reminded of the absence of the rule of law in Belarus. There is a lack of trust as Lukashenka has repeatedly failed agreements. Also, there has never been a policy of regime change toward Belarus and the West never declined the idea of a dialogue. Lukashenka knows what to do to seek engagement with the West: release and rehabilitation of political prisoners are within his powers.

There were several observations from the event. First, Ioffe and Socor continued their blatant campaign in support of Lukashenka's style of dictatorship. They showed no desire to restrict themselves from speaking evident lies about the regime and insults about Belarusian national identity to substantiate why Lukashenka conducts anti-Belarusian and pro-Russian policies. They seemed emboldened by the limited backlash to their previous escapades.

The panel and organizers did not expect sharp reaction from the audience and the rest of the event Socor and Ioffe spent on defensive. President of the Jamestown Foundation Glen Howard, who in the beginning invited to open and frank discussion, even recommended finding other venues in Washington to discuss human rights issues. Moderator Janusz Bugajski several times tried to cut reactions from the audience.

Second, the official representative of Belarus, who has lived in Washington for seven years, did not react to the offensive remarks. In fact, the absence of any reaction from him to such obscenities was striking. After all, these are the functions of diplomatic representations – defending national dignity and delivering official information. Distinct Belarusian national identity and Belarusian language belong to the categories that form the foundation of our statehood and must be defended under any circumstances. Yet, the Embassy representative chose not to react to the insulting remarks of those who had agreed to speak favorably about Lukashenka.

This episode once again clearly demonstrated that the primary objective of Belarusian diplomatic service has narrowed to defending Lukashenka's grip on power even if it demands self-abasement and dealing with personalities with questionable objectives, principles, and methods. This comes at the expense of inherent national interests of Belarus. Diplomatic service by disregarding them weakens national identity, sovereignty, and independence of our country.

Author*: **Valery Kavaleŭski** - Belarusian diplomat from 1998 till 2006.*

Engagement with Belarus and the Lukashenka Factor

By David Marples

The Jamestown Foundation panel on engagement with Belarus, held in Washington, D.C. , last October, raises a number of questions that focus on US and European attitudes to Belarusian president, Aliaksandr Lukashenka. Aside from one's attitude to the policy of sanctions against the country's leaders or the predatory attitude of the Russian leadership under Vladimir Putin, it is worthwhile to focus on more basic questions concerning Belarusian identity and historical past.

To summarize succinctly the attitudes expressed by the Jamestown panel, Belarus has an identity problem. Its residents do not distinguish themselves from Russians, and the state essentially is Russian-speaking. They lack a history as an independent entity and do not think in such terms.

On the other hand, those who look at the modern state and perceive it as viable form of nation building often perceive the country as having separate interests from Moscow. Under Aliaksandr Lukashenka, it is suggested, Belarus has fended off the incursions of Putin on several occasions. So in this respect, the Belarusian president is a defender of Europe from the threats and potential incursions of Russia.

As a side issue, the abuses of human rights that have been taking place in Belarus should worry no one. It is a matter of perspective. Analogous conditions exist in many states that emerged from the former Soviet Union. The situation in Belarus is partly inherited and partly a reflection of the desire for a patrimonial state under a stern but fair ruler. Moreover, Jamestown does not deal with the issue of human rights. Other venues deal with and can comment on such questions.

Certain points may be conceded. Belarus to be sure developed rather late as an emergent nation though it emerged in the 1830s. Yet the modern language (as opposed to the version used in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, suffered from marginalization and a Russian Empire ban lifted only in 1904. It resurfaced around this time, and advanced quite dramatically in the 1920s thanks to Lenin's enlightened policy toward non-Russian republics of "nationalist in culture, socialist in content." As Per Rudling notes in his forthcoming book, it developed alongside Polish, Yiddish, and Russian.

But the situation changed as a result of five events. First, Stalin reversed Lenin's policy in the early 1930s, by which time Belarusian was regarded as part of an unanticipated "nationalist deviationism." Second, Stalin also amended the language in 1933—the so-called 'grammar reform'—to make Belarusian closer to Russian and to remove Polish elements. The change was accompanied by a propaganda campaign against national democrats. Third, in the purges of the 1930s the Soviet leadership eradicated, with utter ruthlessness, the cultural leadership of Belarus, from the Academy of Sciences downward.

Fourth, the Great Patriotic War turned the Soviet leadership even more strongly against non-Russian cultures. Several nationalities were deported en masse from their homelands. Belarusians fell rather into the category of an errant younger brother: some had strayed during the war and fought against the Soviets; while others had fought in the partisans or underground. On the whole they could no longer be trusted. In this same war, Belarusian losses were catastrophic. Its Jewish population, a prominent part of city life, was almost completely eradicated.

After the war, Belarus as a Soviet state remained an outcast for at least two decades. But eventually partisans took over the party leadership in Belarus, just as they had during the war with the ruthless Stalinist Panteleimon Ponomarenko (1902-84), a former Red Army general from Krasnodar. Under partisan leaders, a fourth factor developed: the integration of Belarus into the Russo-centric conception of the Soviet Union. Partisans were feted. Belarusians belatedly became part of the myth of the Great Patriotic War.

The result was several decades that were devastating for the development of a Belarusian state and the creation, instead, of something that at best could be considered a second Russian state: a republic without a past distinct from Russia and with the same Orthodox heritage, and starved of native-language schools and culture. This was the period in which Lukashenka grew up, embracing both the Russian master narrative and Soviet myths.

In this same period, Belarus developed for the first time as an industrial, urbanized entity. The capital Minsk strengthened its dominance as the center and fastest-growing part of the republic. Since independence this preeminence has increased. German scholar Thomas Bohn spoke of a "Minsk phenomenon" in his 2008 book. At independence Minsk was three times larger than the second-biggest city in Belarus (Homiel). Today it is four times larger. Minsk has grown while the rest of the country—especially the villages—has shrunk.

This is important because Belarus as a rural nation, or emergent nation, has ceased to exist. Villages disappear with ever-increasing rapidity, and the peasant, the preserver of national heritage, is facing extinction. The rural dwellers have moved to the towns and become part of Russian culture. There could be no question of a competition between two cultures: Belarusian versus Russian, or more accurately, Belarusian versus Soviet. The Belarusian elite had been deprived of its natural leaders. Instead the rural migrants were integrated into an archetypal, even model, socialist state.

Under Lukashenka, a low-level Soviet apparatchik, this situation has become exacerbated. He has adhered to former Soviet model and consolidated it under his own dictatorial power using the KGB and the police. He is the new Ponomarenko, a *Maleńki Stalin*, or *Baćka*. He has ruthlessly persecuted all those considered his enemies, and what he terms, in disgust, "the opposition." This is the past, the recent history of the state that now calls itself the Republic of Belarus.

To maintain that this is the natural order of things, and that Lukashenka epitomizes the wishes of the average Belarusian is missing the point: **it is this way for a reason. National development was blunted then eradicated, in what can only be termed a form of cultural ethnocide**. It is symbolized by the contrast between the small protests that happen in central Minsk and those today on the Maidan in Kyiv. If one praises Lukashenka and regards him as the natural leader of his country, then one might as well praise the thoroughness with which Stalin slaughtered his opponents to create the Homo Sovieticus, a figure who may have expired elsewhere but is very much alive in Belarus.

It is a system built on lies, brutality, and Great Russian chauvinism, the fundamental flaw in the Soviet vision that most perturbed Lenin at the end of his life. And one wonders why the Jamestown Foundation should throw its support behind such an entity, let alone regard it as something that is alien to and defiant toward Moscow. On the contrary, it epitomizes the Russo-centric view of the world that is propagated by Putin, who has never wavered from his belief in the Soviet cause. Putin and Lukashenka (and for that matter Yanukovych in Ukraine) may differ on some local issues, but in essence they are all part, and supporters of, the Soviet legacy.

The three East Slavic states do have something in common: they will never develop and fulfill their potential until they have cast off the chains of 20th century "Sovietdom" and started anew. Dialogue and renewed engagement with a leader who follows Stalinist traditions and treats his country as his personal fiefdom is hardly the best option.

Ukraine: Between the EU "High Society" and the "Elder Brother Russia"

By Kiryl Kascian

The rapprochement of Ukraine with the EU is being interpreted as a geopolitical and a civilizational choice.

It is likely that such wording has somewhat promotional connotation produced by Ukrainian political elites and aimed both at gaining support among domestic and international audiences. The former is mobilized by the attractiveness of Europe. The latter is associated with a declared "ultimate choice" of development path by the biggest purely European country which thereby is said to get rid of its reputation **of being** a subject of potential "vulnerable" political fluctuations determined by the country's location between the EU and Russia.

The divergence of the two notions – geopolitics and civilization – is very important. Geopolitics refers rather to interstate relationships determining allying and cooperation priorities which may change as a result of various domestic or international factors, or their combination. But in any case they reflect short-, mid- or long-term development priorities of the ruling elites. Civilizations cultural by their

nature, according to Huntington (1996: 43) can change over time but they "are nonetheless meaningful entities, and while the lines between them are seldom sharp, they are real". He stresses (1996: 29) that in the ex-USSR and CEE post-communist countries civilizational identities predetermined the development path of the region's countries, so that Western Christian countries among them went "toward economic development and democratic politics", while the perspectives of the Orthodox countries in these fields were uncertain (Huntington, 1996: 29).

The very Ukrainian story of choosing between European and Eurasian integration merely fits into Huntington's clash of civilizations' concept (1996: 159) which portrays Ukraine as a country split by the border between the Eastern Orthodox (most of the country with the nation's historical capital Kyiv) and the Western (west of the country with the cradle of modern Ukrainian nationalism L'viv) civilizations with different mindsets and values. Thus, in this cleft country different elites "gravitate toward civilizational magnets in other societies" (1996: 138). Within such framework, "vulnerability" of Ukraine is something "natural" determined by the country's borderland position.

However, the reference to the geopolitical and civilizational choice implies that the entire country apparently opts for one civilizational path upon making this choice. It therefore makes this imaginary border tally with the relevant state border of Ukraine and thereby consolidating the entire territory of the country within one civilization.

The declared European choice means political choice in favor of the option of the Western civilization which is equated to the EU. The fact that the EU includes Orthodox Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, and Romania shows that such countries can be incorporated into the Western political construct without loosing their civilizational identity determined by the Orthodox Christianity.

This proves not only the imaginary status of this civilization borders proposed by Huntington and the nature of the EU integration as non-exclusively bounded by the Western civilization pan-European project, but rather implies geopolitical equation of the Orthodox civilization with its biggest and strongest state – Russia. And thereby it means application of the Cold War thinking patterns in case of the Ukraine-EU rapprochement.

The framework of these thinking patterns means Ukraine is being pushed to make an "ultimate" choice between the EU and Russia ; both sides contest to convince Ukraine by different tactics that alliance with them is more advantageous than with the other competitor. In Ukraine itself this choice is seen similarly as a sort of self-imposition of the obligation to make this choice and ally with one of the centers of gravity. Even though any choice made by Ukraine is the matter of its own responsibility, the country's framework for maneuver is limited to this decision and by the pace of implementating own obligations undertaken together with this decision.

At the same time, the consequences of any decision made by Ukraine are uncertain. On the one hand, the "European choice" is only about the association with the EU without any clearly formulated membership perspective. In other words, Ukraine takes efforts to join "the high-society club" while being invited only to the ever closer rapprochement, and not for membership.

Thus, without any clear perspective of membership, the association with the EU seems for Ukraine to have importance for the increase of country's international reputation. It confirms the attractiveness of the brand of the EU in its neighborhood. But it is obvious that for the EU despite the significance to achieve the association with the biggest purely European country, it was more important to prove for itself the solvency of its foreign policy in its eastern neighborhood.

On the other hand, Russia' nervous reaction to Ukraine's rapprochement with the EU is more than predictable. Despite statements **by** Russian authorities on respect for the Ukrainian sovereignty and any choice made by Ukrainian authorities, Russian ruling elites tend to apply thinking patterns determined by phantom pains caused by amputation of national republics of the former USSR and attempt to reclaim/strengthen Russia's role on the post-Soviet space. So, Moscow tends to take an intrusive role of protector and advisor of its smaller neighbors and economically punish them for not being obedient to Russia's claims.

Such behavior I would call "the syndrome of Mother Russia". Despite all Russian claims about equal partnership and economic benefits from a closer cooperation, obsessive introduction of irrational cultural preconditions of the common past combined with the paternalist tactics of Russian elites just repels Ukraine. That is why any rationality of Russian arguments in convincing Ukraine for a closer cooperation is being devaluated by the above-mentioned "syndrome of Mother Russia".

Thus, what is being called geopolitical or civilizational choice of Ukraine is in fact the attempt of the country to take the decisions on its own without obsessive mentoring from "the elder brother". In other words, tactics of Moscow towards Ukraine resulted in the Ukrainian elites' readiness to think that two birds in the bush are worth more than one in hand, i.e. it is better to try to achieve a still uncertain membership in "the high society" than to opt for an easily achievable "equal partnership" with "Mother Russia".

Eastern Partnership's Bilateral "Multilateralism"

By David Erkomaishvili

The Eastern Partnership initiative (EPI) is facing its first major revision. Amid crisis in relations with Ukraine, and Armenia's turn to the Customs Union, the very core of the EPI, its multilateral dimension, fell victim of the EU's policy of uncertainty.

EPI, designed as Brussels' first consolidated effort to reach out to the post-Soviet space states beyond its Baltic members, adjacent to the bloc's external borders,

strives for strategic increase of EU's political presence in the region. Tactically, it has been framed into a multilateral alignment of the six post-Soviet states with the EU. Multilateral component intended to be an essential innovative design feature of the EPI.

Any peacetime alignment, beyond the one having contingency or immediate military-strategic goal, tends to be either economic or political; in many times it is both. EU's attempt to introduce itself as an actor on equal footing with Russia in the post-Soviet space embracing the normative instrument among others proved problematic for the initiative. Because of this aspect, the six partner states were immediately divided into two baskets. More democratic and less-democratic states where Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine were placed in the first basket; Azerbaijan, Belarus and Armenia ended up in the second. The first controversy, thus, lies in the design of the EPI. It was intended to introduce a multilateral component to the cooperation but almost immediately evolved into a series of individual partnerships. Introduced later 'more-for-more' approach along with conditionality further downplayed the initial multilateralism on the level of political cooperation.

Just as it is the case with the normative approach, economic and political alignments proved no less challenging. Concluding free trade agreements was outlined as the ultimate aim of the initiative, together with visa facilitation plans.

Importantly, individual partner states are not aligning to the EU, but rather to EU's individual members. This reveals another obstacle to multilateralism – different intraregional links. Thus, Poland and Lithuania are more supportive of Belarus and Ukraine, while Romania is sponsoring Moldova. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are less fortunate in this regard.

Brief analysis of the partner states' export links, migration flows, minorities, along with their remittances, those are the variables explaining the alignment. They reveal that most of alignments between EU member states and their sponsored post-Soviet counterparts correlate with the numbers in economic and migration relationships. In this regard, the case of Ukraine is striking as Russia is its number one partner in the field of export, migration, minorities, and remittances, while both Germany and Poland combined do not even approximate the level of cooperation between Kiev and Moscow. This may suggest that Kiev's natural alignment at the moment is Russia. But more importantly, multilateralism is rendered useless if EPI is analysed from the perspective of individual links between EU and post-Soviet states.

EU faces a strategic dilemma. On the one hand, its influence needs expanding to the East, further into the post-Soviet space. On the other hand, the instruments available are limited. It is symbolic that the free trade area and visa-free regime, along with financial assistance, are chosen as means to this end. While free trade agreements have the potential to align post-Soviet partner states to the EU via economic reorientation in the long run, visa-free regimes do not cover labour migration which is the main source of movement. At the same time the price for the liberalised visa regime with the EU is too high. In the case of Moldova introduction of the so-called migration points to control migration flow on the line of administrative border with the breakaway Transnistria questions the territorial integrity of the country.

But perhaps one of the main obstacles for extending EU's influence into the post-Soviet space has been the duality in its relations with the EPI partners. On the one hand, Brussels' reluctance to promise or even hint possible future membership for the partners has been a consistent policy. On the other hand, European officials keep reiterating an 'open door policy' mantra.

Such a reluctance to clearly indicate whether the membership is possible leads to a legal and political chaos within the EPI. If the membership was firmly off the table, partner states would have developed a narrow and predictable approach to the alignment with the EU, not to mention that EU's own actions would have been much more logical. EPI keeps suffering from this dualism, while the division between sceptical member states and those advocating further enlargement is fuelling it. Moreover, if membership were firmly dismissed as impossible, then signing association agreements would not have been a politicised deal but rather a technical matter with little political nature.

With Moldova and Georgia being the only two of the six partner states who initialled the association packages, EPI reveals inaccuracies in the program's design. There are no indications that the EU will reduce its involvement in post-Soviet politics, yet any further progress within the EPI or its alternatives requires a major revision of the EU's perception of the post-Soviet space.

Quotes of Quarter

A Belarusian biker said:

he had taken Russian citizenship to buy property but that that didn't mean he was connected with Russia. He indicated he much prefers to be part of a small state, not one whose "greatness consists in its possession of nuclear weapons."

Excerpt from article
"If Russia Disappeared... " on p. 22

CULTURE & SOCIETY

Curt Woolhiser: ″A common Misconception among Foreigners Traveling to Belarus is that They don't even Need to Bother to Learn Any Belarusian″

Foreigners largely and without any doubt perceive Belarus as a part of the russophone world while Belarusian, the country's indigenous language, as well as general linguistic situation in the country remain often unknown for them. Belarusian Review asked Curt Woolhiser, a famous expert in Slavic languages from the Brandeis University how he as a foreigner explains to other foreigners the bilingual situation in Belarus?

Curt Woolhiser: First of all, I would stress that in Belarus, appearances are often deceiving – this applies to language as well as a number of other aspects of Belarusian national life. On the one hand, the fairly prominent display of Belarusian-language or bilingual signage, particularly in Minsk, but also in other cities, does not really reflect the actual low level of use of the language in public communication. At the same time, it is incorrect to assume that, just because very few people use Belarusian on the street, in stores, in the workplace and in government offices, that "nobody actually speaks it." This fails to take into account the fact that many Belarusians who do speak the language only use it at home or in the company of close friends or colleagues, while many others who don't speak it at home are still reasonably proficient in the language, and use it occasionally in situations where they find themselves among Belarusian speakers, or even will, when speaking Russian, switch occasionally into Belarusian for expressive effect. It's interesting to note that according to the March 2012 Budz'ma/NOVAK survey, nearly half of the respondents, 46.5%, said that they didn't speak Belarusian more often simply due to the absence of a "Belarusian-speaking environment," while only 31% indicated that they didn't speak Belarusian because they lack the necessary proficiency in the language.

Paradoxically, even as active speaking proficiency in Belarusian appears to be declining, public attitudes in Belarus toward the language are improving, as has been documented by the Budz'ma/NOVAK surveys of 2009 and 2012. I myself had the opportunity to test the reactions of service sector employees to Belarusian-speaking customers when I accompanied a group of US and Canadian students on a tour of Belarus in the summer of 2009. Our tour guide (a native of Hrodna) and myself made a point of speaking Belarusian to hotel and restaurant personnel, and were pleasantly surprised that most of them didn't bat an eye, and in some cases (for example a hotel administrator in Navahrudak and a young waitress at the "U Francyska" restaurant in Minsk), even answered us in Belarusian. It seems to me that overall, the majority of Belarusian citizens have positive or at least neutral attitudes toward the public use of Belarusian; it is probably only a relatively small minority who are aggressively opposed to the language, although I suspect that such views are more common than they should be among Belarusian officialdom (Lukašenka's own earlier public statements about Belarusian, and his habit of mocking the opposition through the use of Belarusian words and phrases, have no doubt helped legitimize and perpetuate such attitudes).

A common misconception among foreigners traveling to Belarus is that they don't even need to bother to learn any Belarusian, since Russian is the dominant language in public communication. Upon arriving in the country, however, they will begin to notice that signage is not always bilingual, and that in some cases Belarusian-language signs (for example, street names) are not even duplicated in Russian. In cases where the Belarusian and Russian variants differ significantly, this can often lead to confusion (imagine the predicament of the hapless foreigner who has been told that he needs to get off at the "Oktiabr'skaya" metro station, but can only find "Kastryčnickaja" on the map of the Minsk metro). Foreigners who have a knowledge of Russian will also soon discover that certain Belarusian words and phrases may occur in both spoken and written Russian in Belarus, giving it a certain "national" coloring (for example, many Russian-speaking Belarusians are surprised to learn that speakers of "Russian Russian" are unfamiliar with such words as *šufljadka* 'desk drawer' (cf. "Russian Russian" *(vydvižnoj) jaščik*) or *kumpjak* 'ham' ("Russian Russian" *okorok*), etc.). Perhaps most importantly, foreign visitors to Belarus will discover that the Belarusian language still plays a significant role in the country's cultural life, particularly in literature, music and the theatre. Indeed, critics have argued that a great deal of the most interesting contemporary literature from Belarus is in Belarusian, rather than Russian. While a few Russian-language authors from Belarus have attained some degree of international recognition, for example, Svetlana Aleksievich and Viktor Martinovich, the number of poets and prose writers writing in Belarusian whose works have a broader appeal to an international audience and have been translated into other languages is considerably larger. At this stage, at least, it is difficult to speak of a Russian-language national literature in Belarus, equivalent in quality and quantity to the English-language national literatures of Ireland or Scotland, or even the postcolonial English-language literature of India and the Indian diaspora. As far as contemporary Belarusian music is concerned, there are of course some excellent Russian-language groups such as Lyapis Trubetskoy and Neuro Dubel that have achieved a mass audience both within Belarus and beyond its borders, but even they have produced some songs in Belarusian, which reflects a widespread attitude that rock music produced specifically for a Belarusian audience should give priority to the Belarusian language.

Foreigners also need to be aware of the fact that the linguistic division in Belarusian society does not correlate significantly with an ethnic split, inasmuch as the majority of Russophones in Belarus self-identify as Belarusian rather than Russian (although it should be noted that the 9% of self-identified ethnic Russians in Belarus overwhelmingly tend to identify Russian rather than Belarusian as their native language). In this regard, Belarus is fundamentally different from former Soviet republics such as Estonia or Latvia, where, although the percentage of ethnic Russians and non-titular Russophones is higher than in Belarus, the titular nationalities have on the whole remained loyal to the ethnic language. The situation is somewhat comparable in eastern, southern and to some extent, central Ukraine, although Ukraine has a much larger self-identified ethnic Russian population (nearly twice as large as in Belarus), even if in practice, especially in eastern and southern Ukraine, ethnic distinctions are often blurred.

Belarusians like to compare the language situation in their country with that of Irish Gaelic in the Republic of Ireland, and indeed certain parallels can be observed. Although in the country's Constitution Irish is declared the national and first official language (with English as second official language), and although signage in public spaces and to some extent government documentation is bilingual, very little government business is done in Irish and government officials are no longer even required to know the language, although it remains a compulsory subject in the schools. According to recent statistics, less than 10% of the population speak Irish regularly outside the educational system, and about 38% of those over the age of 15 are considered to have active speaking ability in Irish. In 2011, Fine Gael, the largest party in the Irish parliament and the senior partner in a coalition government with Labour, proposed making the study of Irish in the schools optional. While the proposal has yet to be implemented, and provoked considerable opposition among Irish language advocates, the fact that a leading political party could even consider such a proposal is quite telling about the current status of Irish in the country.

The Irish case shows that even in a modern, democratic society, a declared policy of official bilingualism does not necessarily guarantee the equal use of the two languages. For this to happen, there has to be adequate legislation in place, and legal sanctions applied to those who fail to comply, which in turn require not only broad public support for a policy of genuine bilingualism, but also a sufficient level of proficiency in both languages among current and potential government employees as well as employees in the service sector. Moreover, government support for an endangered language will not necessarily reverse the process of language shift if there is insufficient public support for reviving the language as the language of the home and everyday life.

The "bilingual" situation in Belarus also differs significantly from parts of Europe where the language of autonomous regions has co-official status with the state language, for example, Catalonia in Spain or Friesland in the Netherlands. In both of these cases, the regional languages, Catalan and Frisian, have co-official status on their territory, and the majority of the indigenous population within the region are bilingual in the regional language and the state language. In Catalonia, for example, according to recent surveys, in everyday communication, 35.54% mainly speak Catalan, 45.92% mainly speak Spanish, and 11.95% use both languages equally (although the percentage of Catalan speakers is higher outside the capital, Barcelona). Catalan is the main language of the government of Catalonia, nearly all primary education is in Catalan, and television and radio programs on the government channels are all in Catalan. Businesses are required by law to provide all information (advertising, menus, brochures, etc.) in Catalan, although there are no restrictions on parallel use of Spanish and Occitan (the third official language in Catalonia, which is regionally restricted to its northern periphery). In Friesland, 55% of the population consider Frisian their native language, while 74% are able to speak it, and the language is widely used alongside Dutch in the educational system, as well as in government institutions and the media. Thus, although neither Catalonia nor Friesland have the status of independent states (although the Catalans are explicitly recognized in the Spanish constitution as a distinct nation), the position of the titular languages in these autonomous regions, both in terms of language provision by the state and in terms of actual language use, is significantly stronger than that of Belarusian in contemporary Belarus.

I think it's also important for foreigners to know that bilingualism and multilingualism have for centuries been common throughout Belarusian territory, and that Russian, despite its currently dominant position, is a relative latecomer to this linguistic mix. Many foreigners who view Belarus as an integral part of the "Russian World" would be surprised to learn that the Polish language had a similarly dominant position (at least among the upper social strata) on Belarusian territory from the 17th century to the second half of the 19th century, and that for a time in the late 18th century, more books in Polish were published on Belarusian territory than anywhere in what is today Poland. So for Belarusians, speaking one language for everyday, informal use, and using another in more formal contexts (a situation known in sociolinguistics as *diglossia*) is not really all that unusual in historical perspective.

Quotes of Quarter

A roofer said:

"it would be better if we integrated with Europe and not with Russia." Twice, he said, Russians had "seized everything," once during the Russian Empire and then in the USSR. He said that because the Soviets called Belarus Belorussia, it was critically important for everyone to call it Belarus now. "What kind of Belorussia are we if we are Belarus?

Excerpt from article
"If Russia Disappeared... "on p. 22

The Patroness of Palessie Can Return Home

By Adam Maldzis

I have known for a long time that until 1860 in the Roman Catholic Church in Juravičy (now an Orthodox church in the Kalinkavičy district of the Homiel region) there was a painting of the Madonna that became famous throughout Belarusian and Ukrainian lands due to miracles attributed to it. Later, during the conference of the committee *Viartannie* (Return) at the Belarusian Culture Foundation, I was told that, due to repressions following the defeat of the 1863 uprising, it was secretely exported to Poland; but it remained uknown to me where exactlz it was moved to. . Residents of Homiel raised several times before the committee the issue of returning the icon. However, clergymen told me that it's probably not possible ; one and a half centuries have passed, traces disappeared...

Common pilgrimages

I just received from Baranavičy the first 2012 issue of the monthly *Dyjaloh* (Dialogue) published by the church of Our Lady of Fatima in Belarusian, Russian and Polish languages. It contained a large photo-report by Raisa Suško, entitled "On One Path." It was devoted to the autumn pilgrimage that is lately being annually performed from Mazyr to Juravičy. The pilgrimage unites the Greek Orthodox, led by the Turaŭ and Mazyr bishop Stefani, and Roman Catholics, led by the priest Tadevuš Volas. Leading the procession, they carry in their hands a copy of the miraculous icon.

Yet, where is its original? *Dyjaloh* states that the pilgrims were handed its small paper copy with this inscription: "The Miraculous Image of the Mother of God of Juravičy. It is preserved in the the Kraków church of Saint Barbara (Poland)." The photo report ends with words by bishop Stefani, addressed to the pilgrims in the church in Juravičy: "So we completed our today's procession. Note: together with Orthodox Christians there also participated Christians of the Western confession. The Mother of God never pushed anybody away; on the contrary, she is calling — the Orthodox, Catholics, and all Christians. ' Come all to me, and I will be for you the Mother on Earth and in Heaven' "

Meetings in Kraków

It so happened that soon I was included in the Belarusian group of participants of the Belarusian-Polish "round table," dedicated to the common cultural heritage, and organized under the auspices of UNESCO by the International center of culture in Kraków, and the Polish institute in Minsk. Naturally, after receiving the invitation, I immediately recalled the original of the icon of Our Lady of Juravičy. I automatically thought: "Should we raise the issue of return at the conference?" And I clearly heard an inner voce: "No, only the exchange of the copy for the original ! Because, what will then remain on the walls of the Saint Barbara church ? An empty spot ?"

I quickly left for a blessing to the Catholic curia and the Orthodox diocese. However, there I heard rather pessimistic reflections: so much time has passed... The same skepticism was also heard after my speech at the "round table."

- To return ? But where to ?- To Jurevičy, unknown to anyone ? Before Palessie there existed Lviv. Rather there.

And before Lviv there was Bar, where the hetman of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Stanislau Kaniecpolski, being afraid of Cossacks, decided to give the icon to the Jesuits, - I dared to interrupt. One of them, the famousmissionary Marcin Tyrawski, after coming to Palessie, decided to build a temple in Juravičy, and to donate it the icon, already known for miraculous deeds. And mainly - the painting is obviously associated with the Eastern rite. That means, its place should be not as much in a Catholic church, than in an Orthodox temple. This issue may be solved painlessly, since we are dealing not with the return, but rather with an exchange. Our ancestors managed to produce such a masterful copy, that it's dificult to distinguish it from the orginal.

The director of the International Cultural Centre, professor Jacek Purchla on the same day wisely said that the problem should be solved by the icon's owners themselves. And he advised me to visit the Jesuits.

"Everything is possible"

So the next day, accompanied by the "guardian angel," assigned to help me, I left for the famous St. Mary's church, at the footsteps of which sat the modest in appearance church of Saint Barbara, built in the Gothic style in the 14th century. Upon entering it, on the left side we saw a chapel; in its center the icon, brought from Juravičy, radiated mercy. Small in dimensions, it stood out among other paintings by its obviously Byzantine origin.

After that we walked around the church building and got to a small square, formerly the St. Mary's cemetery, an then the market, from where an inconspicious corridor led to the monastery courtyard. The Jesuit father, who came to meet us, was already aware of matters of our interest; soon we heard from his lips the desired phrase:

- With God's mercy, and when Polish and Belarusian ministers of culture are in favor, everything is possible.

At farewell I received a present — an illustrated book " Church of Saint Barbara in Kraków," in which we found the chapter "History of the painting of the Mother of God of Juravičy," and two postcards, not sold publicly. On one - there was the icon itself; on the other —the church of Saint Barbara.

I have to admit — I left the monastery building somewhat confused. Why was the Jesuit father so kind and fore-warning to me ? Was it because I was familiar with activities of Jesuit colleges in Belarusian lands, and highly appreciated the publishing and museum activities of the Polack Jesuit Academy ? Not likely. Then why ?

The solution

I began reading the presented book only in Warsaw. While waiting for the train to Minsk, I impatiently began turning the pages. Then finally I found a paragraph about what happened to the painting in Juravičy, and about how

it got to Kraków. The following lines are worth quoting as a whole:

"Under the influence of special inspiration, received from the Mother of God, the priest Tyrawski built a wooden chapel in Juravičy in Palessie (1673), and placed there the icon endowed with mercy. Soon Juravičy became a famous Marian temple. In the first half of the 18th century a brick temple and residence were built. After the Jesuit activities stopped (1773), the temple was taken care of by the Bernardine fathers, then by the Capuchin fathers, and after the 1831 uprising by parish priests. After the 1863 uprising the priest Hugo Godecki, the last provost in Juravičy, placed in the altar a copy of the painting of the Mother of God, and the painting itself, famous by its mercy, moved to be stored by Gabriela Horwat (from the Wańkowicz family), the wife of the Rečyca district marshall. In May of 1885 Gabriela Horwat handed over the icon in deposit to Jesuits from the Kraków college. Soon afterwards the Jesuits placed the icon in the church of Saint Barbara."

This is why the Jesuit father was so kind with me: he already knew, while I did not yet, that the Juravicy icon was moved to Kraków for temporary storage. Morally, as well as legally, this is a weighty argument.

The necessary explanations

Who then produced the masterful copy of the Juravičy painting ? When it was handed over to the Orthodox clergy, it could not be distinguished from the original .

Roman Jurkowski, the university professor in Olsztyn (Poland), who knows Belarus well, told me that it was the talented Palesian artist Alena Skirmunt. She made the copy most likely before the 1863 uprising, because for her participation in it, she was arrested and exiled to Tambov (and later, to Crimea). That means that the copy has artistic value. Yet it was not endowed by the same spiritual mercy, as the oginal. Inhabitants of the Homiel region were not able to tell me about cases of miraculous revelations in Juravičy after the original painting in the altar was replaced by the copy.

And in Kraków ? Replying to my question whether divine mercy was manifested there, in the St. Barbara's church, the Jesuit father said that such cases were not determined.

Thus, the original, exchanged for a copy, is waiting for its festive return to Juravičy. Such a festive act would favor better mutual understanding between the Orthodox and Catholic believers, and their further rapprochement on the common Christian basis.

*Author **Dr. Adam Maldzis** is a renowned Belarusian literary scholar, historian and publicist.*

"West-Rus'izm" and the Politics of Memory in today's Belarus

By Andrzej Tichomirow

Does politics of memory exist in Belarus? On one hand, it is rather difficult to call the political activity exhibited by various government organs in the field of past memory an actual "politics of memory" in the western sense. First of all, because the authority does not use this concept to actualize these or other actions. Yet, when we turn our attention to the practical side of actions, they do have all the features of active "politics of memory."

A very limited period of history is being actualized — mainly that of the 20th century, associated almost exclusively with the Soviet past. The main event, around which a collective consciousness is being built, is the *Great Patriotic War*. This concept is practically repeating those ideas about the war, that took shape in 1960-1980, in a somewhat modernized form.

In such a limited form other periods of Belarus' history appear as only auxiliary elements for actualization of the current policy. The early medieval Polack, Turaŭ-Pinsk and other duchies, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth , or the Russian Empire period are usually being used in a very limited fashion or in cases of some anniversary dates, very often only on a regional or even local level. Such a situation is sufficiently understandable. For actualizing memory of the past on a state level it is simpler to use events not very remote in time, first of all because there exist witnesses of those events. The availability of real (or even falsified) testimonies of an event make such actualization — with help of mass media — more probable and understandable for most of the population. Such testimonies (properly prepared) may be very well utilized for showing an "objective" image of history, that is then "canonized" in school textbooks. Accordingly, alternative versions of describing events, other testimonies at a certain moment may be called "fantastic," "incorrect," or "hostile."

The actualization of the "West-Rus'ism" ideology in today's Belarus took place in the middle of 1990s. The idea was characteristic for the Russian Empire period, and represented essentially a form of a "hybrid" self-consciousness of a part of clergy, officialdom, and partially of Orthodox farmers. The fact that it gained gained a "second" life is a sufficiently unexpected fashion for a country in this part of Europe. At the end of 20th century this type of idea was considered at least absolutely archaic and contradicted those processes of awakened nationalism in all neighboring countries.

During the Soviet period the "West-Rus'ism" was on one hand an unacceptable ideology. Monarchism, a strong actualization of the Orthodox religiosity and the resistance to the "idea of progress" fully contradicted the communist ideology and could not be used. In addition, most advocates of "West-Rus'ism" were wiped out, or had to emigrate. However, the idea of the exclusive unity of Belarusians and Ukrainians with Russians , the anti-west-

ernization component in the form of anti-Catholicism and negative attitudes toward the Polishness, and tendencies toward isolationism were actually included in the new image of Belarus' history on the wave of political repressions of the 1930s. Al these features also very strongly affected the general concept of the past that took shape after the Second World War.

The gradual revision of these notions, that began since the 1960s (to a certain degree it was influenced by publishing activities of the Belarusian diaspora in the West), prepared a change of the historical narrative that took place at the end of 1980s — and beginning of the 1990s. Such a change, labeled the "national-state concept," was accepted by a certain part of historians. However, the radical change of the country's political course since the middle of 1990s, oriented toward integration with Russia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, also elicited a demand for a completely different historical concept.

A first possible version was the return to the old communist vision, well known by most of the ruling elites; such a transformation did not demand any extra efforts. Initially , precisely this was being utilized. The form of the communist memory, centered around the *Great Patriotic War*, became dominant again. Utilizing the Soviet holidays, changing the state symbols, introduction of the official bilingualism in 1995, as well as the course for integration with Russia, were the elements of the "new" culture of memory.

The political, economic and cultural orientation on Russia under completely changed circumstances required, however, not only stressing the common Soviet past. Such a political turn demanded simultaneous attention to earlier periods of history, that would legitimize it to a greater degree. The imperial idea of the unity of eastern Slavs, rebirth of the Orthodox church, the cult of strong power were elements that could be used by the "West-Rus'ism.

Former advocates of the communist ideology, and of Marxism-Leninism have sufficiently quickly stopped criticizing the religiosity, and began paying more attention to the period of the Russian empire, as well as criticizing political and social movements of leftist directions. Such symbiosis was fradually transformed into a distinct project of *Ideology of the Belarusian state*, officially institutionalized in 2003.

Introducing in the institution of higher education the *Ideology of the Belarusian state* a separate educational discipline took place sufficiently fast. However, the possibility of teaching essentially quite different ideological components resulted in this course becoming very eclectic, combining both communist and "West-Rus'ian" elements. In one "state ideology" textbook one can find extensive reflections about the ethnic connection and actual common identity of Belarusians with Russians, and a few pages later — about the "West-Rus'ian" ideology not corresponding to needs of the Belarusian state. [1] Presenting such incompatible statements points out not only to the eclectism of the educational discipline, but also to the self-consciousness of the author of this text.

For present advocates of "West-Rus'ism " in its initial 19^{th} - 20^{th} century version the "state ideology" contains too many unacceptable elements, primarily of the Soviet origin. The combination of the Orthodox religiosity and tolerance of the communist ideology is sufficiently problematic for this group of people. However, it's worthwile noting that in the "state ideology" they may be combined quite well.

The generation change of active humanities scholars who influence the authorities' policies took place approximately at the end of 1990s — beginning of 2000s. Most advocates of the Soviet Marxism were replaced by the younger generation, oriented mainly on fast career growth; precisely for them the newly actualized "West-Rus'ism " became a very attractive idea. Complete orientation on today's Russia, on the Russian culture, strong elements of the ethnic nationalism and anti-western rhetoric became fundamental elements of the texts published by these authors. Basic topics of historiographic works by these authors are events attributed to the Russian Empire period. They are mainly events, connected with liquidation of the Uniate church (1839), anti-Russian uprisings of 1830-1831 and 1863-1864, the Russification policy. In focus of these works there appears a very intensive "deconstruction" of the Belarusian national historical narrative, described as "unnatural," "anti-popular," and "mendacious." Lately the main object of such "deconstruction" was the uprising of 1863-1864, and its leader on Belarusian lands — Kastuś Kalinoŭski. Additionally the very concept of Russification is subject to criticism, and some of the authors consider it un-scholarly. By utilizing certain elements of western constructivist theories of nation and nationalism, today's "West-Rus'ians" strive to prove that Belarusians have no tradition of armed struggle against Russia, or, at least, that such attempts were characteristic of the Polish population in Belarusian lands. Most active authors of such direction are concentrated around the *scholarly-enlightening project Zapadnaya Rus,* that is formally not registered with the state, but is informally supported by the Orthodox church in Belarus, and by a part of governmental structures. This organization conducted in last few years several scholarly conferences, is maintaining its own Web-site, and attempts to engage in "ideological" control of historical policies. *Zapadnaya Rus* actively directs appeals to various governmental institutions (among others — Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus). One such appeal demanded calling the French-Russian war of 1812 the "Fatherland War of 1812," — complying with the term, officially accepted by the Russian and Soviet historiography (this postulate was actually supported), to restore in Minsk the monument to the Russian emperor Alexander II, demolished during the Bolshevik dictatorship, and also to call the 1863-1864 uprising in Belarus as "exclusively Polish."

It is worth noting that —in addition to such publicist activeness — the latest history textbooks, now used in schools — also contain many elements of "West-Rus'ism ," especially when describing events from Russian Empire

period. A particular place among them belongs to the textbook edited by Jakaŭ Traščanok; here one may additionally find special anti-Polish rhetoric and justifications of Stalinist repressions in the times of Soviet Union.

An important element of such activeness is the actual non-acceptance of using the Belarusian language in the public space. The minimal presence of Belarusian elicits accusations of ”discrimination” of the Russian language. A special example of these efforts can be the discussion on the additional usage of Belarusian-language signs in the Minsk Metro in the classic Belarusian Latin alphabet - *lacinka.* The introduction of such additional signs outraged the advocates of ”West-Rus'ism.” Their basic argument was the fact that signs were transliterated not from Russian, but from Belarusian; also that the signs were using diacritical signs, characteristic for the Belarusian *lacinka.* The ”West-Rus'ians” saw it a ”polonization” of the Belarusian language, and expressed arguments that most foreigners, ”used to reading English,” won't be able to read such transliteration. This type of criticisms did not result in changing signs; it resulted in additional explanations by philologists on the signs being in the Belarusian tradition and corresponding to the official legislature.

Such attempts of ”ideological control” by the ”West-Rus'ians” are being treated as some marginal phenomena; however, under proper conditions they may lead to realizing their postulates. Here the example of school textbooks is very characteristic, and rather dangerous for educating the young generation in the spirit of freedom and tolerance (especially toward ethnic and religious minorities.)

Corresponding criticisms and requests directed to local authorities do concern not only names of historical events, but also their memorialization. The monument of the Grand Duke Alhierd in Viciebsk, prepared for installation was actually postponed as result of written requests by the local ”Russian community” and ”West-Rus'ian” activists. At the same time it is worth noting that so far these activists did not very actively affect the policies of memorialization and creating new ”places of memory.”

One may characterize the Belarusian project of policy of memory as very controversial. On one hand it is directed in support of society's unity and avoiding various ethnic, religious and social controversial moments. Yet, the logic of a political regime demands also the availability of some group of adversaries, who appear as domestic and external *Others*. A full renewal and utilization of the old Soviet ideology in quite new circumstances was practically impossible. The concept of the ”Great Patriotic War” and memory of the victory over Nazism were supplemented by the authorities by various elements of ”West-Rus'ism.” A more attentive attitude toward religiosity (Orthodox, first of all), excluding from the memory events, recalling confrontation with Russia in the past, propagation of thesis about the actual ethnic unity of Belarusians and Russians — these are the dominant theses, adopted from the ”West-Rus'ian” rhetoric.

Radzim Harecki: To Reach a Belarusian Belarus

The history of our country knows many significant events, many outstanding people. **Radzim Harecki** is one of those who continue creating Belarus. Betweeen 1993 and 2001 he has been the president of the World Association of Belarusians ”Baćkaŭščyna,” since then a member of the Association's Council, a member of Belarus' Academy of Sciences, a civic activist, author of many scholarly and journalist works. He represents for many a moral authority and a life's reference point.

Recently, on December 7, Radzim Harecki celebrated his 85th anniversary. This served as a good chance to inquire Mr. Radzim about his life and his road to Belarus, about his activity in the World Association of Belarusians ”Baćkaŭščyna and much more. We offer his story to our readers' attention.

Childhood in a Russian-language environment

My road to the Belarusian language was not simple. I was born in Minsk; however, soon I was deported together with my parents . They were arrested and sent to the Solovki prison camp. At that time I was about four years old - not old enough to learn Belarusian.



Dr. Radzim Harecki

My father and mother always spoke and wrote to each other in Belarusian. I was mostly brought up by grandma and grandpa on my mother's side. They were Belarusians too - from the Bielastok region, yet they spoke Russian, although they understood Belarusian. This is why I heard Russian all around me - my environment was Russian. My father spent much time in jails; later he was constantly on business trips. One might say that I first encountered a small Belarusian-language environment when we were living again together with my parents. That happened when I attended the eighth grade , and I was already a fairly mature boy.

At that time we lived in the Urals, in the town Chusovoy. That was after our evacuation, at the end of the Second World War.

Our family life was good; parents were kind to us children and treated us as adults — never scolded us. My father worked as a geologist on the so-called ”constructions

of communism," He was constructing hydraulic power plants, and associated channels. He was the chief geologist of the Hydroproject, a scientific research project for studying geological conditions for building these "constructions of communism."

Although my father was constantly away on business trips, yet we already lived together, and I heard my native language.

My road to Belarusian

Belarus was making a great impression on me , although at that time I really did not know it. My father always liked it when mother or grandmother cooked, for instance, potatoes with cracklings. He used to say: "It tastes great - just like in Bahaćkaŭka!" I was then just a boy, yet I began wondering: what was this Bahaćkaŭka, that made such an impression on my father ?

I was gradually absorbing Belarusian from my parents. Otherwise our language environment was purely Russian. My father also wrote letters to me in Belarusian; I read them, and just had to reply to my father.. Thus, in the tenth grade, and perhaps already as a student, I gradually began speaking and writing a little in Belarusian. True, at first it was not very good, since I heard it only from hearing. However, little by little I absorbed it - and began to understand it.

My 4 years older brother knew more Belarusian, since he attended in Minsk first two grades of a Belarusian school. Later, as students, we both lived in Moscow alone, without parents. Then we began speaking Belarusian to each other.

The Return to Homeland

I saw Belarus for the first time in 1961, when the three of us - father, myself and my brother drove by car from Moscow. My uncle, father's brother Parfir, lived in Mahilioŭ. At first we stopped over at his place and then travelled all over Belarus. Everything was very much to our liking: people, places, nature. The only thing amazed us: one heard very little our native Belarusian. We in Moscow spoke it, and here ... When, in Mahilioŭ., for instance, we visited a store, and conversed in Belarusian, other people in the store nudged each other and commented: " The writers are visiting us !" This moved us strongly. We hoped to hear our native language, and found that here only writers are using it ! On one hand, we were overjoyed to see Belarus again; yet, on the other hand — we experienced such bitterness and unpleasant feeling in our soul, that Belarusian, our native language, is being used so little...

The KGB did not allow my father to return, as "a people's enemy," and me — as his son. We tried returning many times; my father always wanted to return sooner, unfortunately, without success. He returned only in 1969. His title of academician was restored , and he was formally rehabilitated in 1958. However, only 10 years later he was allowed to return to Belarus. I myself returned in 1971 , in December — upon invitation by Mikalaj Barysievič, the president of the BSSR Academy of Sciences.

Thus, I have spent almost 40 years in Russia. However, my Belarusian roots and genes survived. Here, in my home country, I very quickly began feeling at home. Our years in the Homeland, together as a family, became for us the best and brightest times in all aspects: professional and creative, enjoying Belarusian theaters, philharmonies, museums, friendships with writers, the nature of our native country etc.

Let the authorities begin speaking Belarusian

Unfortunately, the current situation of the Belarusian language is unfavorable; it's very bad that our government and the entire leadership does not speak Belarusian — it is Russian-speaking. Moreover, it opposes everything Belarusian; this is what frightens me constantly. One should recall the writer Jakub Kolas who very correctly said, that when our bosses will begin speaking Belarusian, people will begin using it as well.

We have been for a long time under pressure either from Poland, or from Muscovy. However, although our language was prohibited for centuries, it survived and is alive. Look: there was a very brief period of Revival, when our political opposition exerted strong efforts, and the Law on Languages was adopted. It lasted less than a decade, yet the use of our language has spread at a surprising speed. In my opinion, if we had in our country a Belarusian language environment, and, especially, if there were no pressure from above to speak Russian, everything would have been much better.

Let us recall the process of Belarusization in the 1920s of the previous century. Then, in 1924, the Belarus' Council of People's Commissars adopted a decision on complete Belarusization. First of all, it made all government reporting to be conducted in Belarusian. Then, gradually, the country's government, and the highest official institutions, began using Belarusian. As far as I can remember, by 1928 about 80% of these institutions worked using Belarusian. This was an example of successful Belarusization: it was completed practically in a moment.

When we passed the Law on Languages — the writer Nil Hilevič was heading the Committee on Culture and Education — a very short term of 10 years was expected to complete the transition to Belarusian, even though we were much more lenient: . When in 1994 Belarus became a presidential republic, the Belarusization process was not yet completed. Although, even then many institutions switched to Belarusian in their record keeping. In my opinion, if the process continued, by now Belarusian would have been used in 50% of cases, if not more.

After our country became presidential in nature, moreover with a Russian-speaking president, and after the 1995 referendum, the efforts of Belarusization did not bring the desired results.

Undoubtedly, public education also played a very important role in the country's Belarusization. If our current laws were followed consequently, the language situation would have been completely different. According to our constitution, both languages — Belarusian and Russian, are official. Yet, for some reason, Belarusian is official only in "quotation marks."

In the period of 1920s we had even four official languages. Even other languages were then treated with leniency

and respect. Anyone working for the government or other higher instutions, had to know all these languages — not only his own. And now: try to address an official in Belarusian; they pretend not understanding even the most common words that even Russians can understand. I have to remark, however, that many Russians do speak Belarusian quite well. This is the correct approach: once you live in this country, you should know the language of its titular nation.

Nowadays the issue of independence is being raised quite often. I wish to state that a real independence without the Belarusian language, culture and other national attributes is impossible; we should fight for all these values. It's good that this is the position of our "Baćkaŭščyna"organization . We are not a political organization; we stand for Belarusianness, for which we do fight. Our goal is to reach a Belarusian Belarus.

The life with "Baćkaŭščyna"

The World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna," was established during the period of Revival in early 1990s In the Soviet Union nobody could even talk about this type of organization. When the Soviet empire unexpectedly collapsed, various nationalities raised their heads, including Belarusians; independent states were established. This is when the Revival trend began. Belarusian associations began their activities; our government also switched to Belarusian, especially members of BNF (Belarusian Popular-Front), headed by Zianon Paźniak, and many others.

The initative in creating an organization, like "Baćkaŭščyna" was due to Mr. Jaŭhien Liecka, although the idea was flying in the air. Liecka invited his like-minded friends, including me, to form an organizational committee, which conducted a founding conference, and later staged the first convention of Belarusians from the "near abroad." We were officially registered. Later we asked the writer Vasil Bykaŭ to be the organization's president. He was not very willing, due to his many other duties, but eventually he agreed, since he understood that the cause is worth supporting. We, of course, wanted to have a significant and powerful figure to head our organization, and thus increase its weight.

In 1993 we conducted the First Convention of Belarusians of the World. Then Vasil Bykaŭ approached me, and proposed that I take over the leadership of "Baćkaŭščyna. " For me this proposal was very unexpected. Yet Mr. Bykaŭ explained to me, why he wanted to see me heading "Baćkaŭščyna. " It turned out that the Convention's participants agreed with him; there were no other candidates for the post. I was elected unanimously.

Naturally, there was much work to be done. In 1993 I was already the director of the Institute of Geophysics and Geochemistry at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus; besides I was serving as the vice-president of the Academy. Moreover, at that time the Academy's situation was rather complex. Many wanted to dissolve it or reform. However, I was relatively young, strong and vital — so I agreed, and worked on both positions.

In my opinion, from the very beginning of the Association's activity we have selected a very good administration. For the post of director we elected Mrs. Hanna Surmač - on my recommendation. It was mainly her, who organized the First Convention. She was then heading the State Archives - Museum of Literature and Art and she liked this job very much. However, she also perceived the importance of working for "Baćkaŭščyna," and she left her director's position. She assumed the main burden of organizing the Convention; this also touched me. Our state is not helping non-governmental organizations, who have to manage on their own.

It was very important that the government's attitude to "Baćkaŭščyna" was generally favorable. Much help was received from persons, who had closer contacts with Belarusians living abroad. For instance: the former minister of foreign affairs Piotra Kraŭčanka or Hienadź Buraŭkin — who represented Belarus in the United Nations. Or Vitaŭt Kipel and Janka Zaprudnik - prominent representatives of the Belarusian diaspora. They helped us to look for Belarusians abroad and to maintain contacts with them. This was enormous work.

And how many difficulties had to be overcome in inviting delegates and getting entry visas for them ! Many were afraid to come. They expected to be arrested on arrival and imprisoned. Many did not come at all....

And those who came: it was impossible to watch them without tears in your eyes. Some fell to their knees, and kissed the ground of their native country they finally saw again.

The Convention was unforgettable. The hall of the Minsk Theater of Opera and Ballet was filled to capacity. There were no more seats available. Everything was organized with the government's help. Nobody arrested us or beat us. On the contrary, we were protected. We managed to establish very good contacts with the delegates from abroad. In 1994 Ms. Surmač and myself were invited to the scheduled Convention of Belarusians of North America. There we met and made friends with many countrymen living overseas.

Later I was reelected to the organization's second term. I was even asked to remain for the third term . I declined, since, according to "Baćkaŭščyna's" statutes, one can be the organization's chairman for no more than two terms.

Later the organization was headed by Anatol Hryckievič, then by Aliaksiej Maračkin, and by Aliena Makoŭskaja, who is the Association's president today. She was with us from the very beginning and grew up in your eyes. She is capable, intelligent and well acquainted with all our problems. In my opinion, she fully deserves her position. The current Association's director — Nina Šydloŭskaja, and Aliena Makoŭskaja are people who worked with us from the very beginning.

As before, I remain in "Baćkaŭščyna's" Council and continue to help in its work. I took part in preparing and conducting all Conventions of Belarusians of the World. The Second, Third and Fourth Conventions were very difficult; there were many attempts to dissolve us. Nevertheless, we managed to survive — with help from our diaspora. We

succeeded in creating a number of Belarusian associations both in the former Soviet Union, and in the "far abroad." And personally, until today I have been always connected with the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna."

Source: Press Center of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna."

The Kaunas Congress

Evaluating the 19th Century History during the Kaunas Congress: is it Topical?

By Andrzej Tichomirow

A distinctive "fashion" to study the 19th century history, primarily coupled with interest in problems of forming modern nations in Europe and other regions of the world, has infected Belarusian historians as well.

The search for nations' roots and the "intrusion" of Western theories of nation and nationalism in the post-Soviet space since 1991 logically led to the renewal of studies of the 19th century.

The historians' interest is mainly focused on the problem of forming the modern Belarusian nation, mastering the western terminological apparatus, and on an — at least partial — adoption of a related methodology. . It was also worthwhile to note certain interest in the problems associated with the concept of "empire." However, it never extended beyond the borders of present Belarus, and has not continued in some comparative research.

Certain methodological movements that also took place in the Belarusian humanities, have caused a change in the generation of historians who returned to archives and began re-evaluating the imperial period.

Last year, during the Second International Congress of Belarusian Studies in Kaunas (Lithuania), I coordinated the work of the section dealing with the 19th century history. Despite the fact that at that time many declared participants did not come, the section's work proceeded in an interesting way, primarily due to questions from the audience and discussion of possible new research topics.

The Third Congress in Kaunas took place on 11 - 13 October in a slightly altered organizational format. Now there was a considerably smaller number of sections than in 2012, and they were more logically distributed. Historians engaged in the 19th century research were united in one section with the scholars focusing on Belarusian minorities and diasporas in other countries. The coordination of the joint section's work - together with Dr. Tomasz Blaszczak, was an important and atypical experience for me. It was atypical because two different topic were merged ; most diaspora researchers, present at the Congress, were specialists on Belarusian minorities in the Baltic states. Nevertheless , problems of the Russian empire epoch often have very little in common with the Belarusian minorities' realities in Lithuania and Latvia in the years 1920-1930. However, the problems of emigration were relevant to Belarusian lands already in the 19th century, and even earlier. Therefore, it was quite logical to combine these two broad topics.

During the first day of the Congress a common conference was held in the section entitled "Belarus as Part of Russian empire. Belarus as a Minority and Diaspora in the 20-21st centuries." Outstanding specialists from Belarus, Poland, Japan and Latvia appeared in this conference.

Dzianis Lisiejčykaŭ directed the public's attention to the the everyday life of the Uniate priests in Belarusian lands in the 18-19th centuries. In a certain sense he presented his monography "The everyday life of a Uniate parish priest in the Belarusian-Lithuanian lands in 1720-1839), which already the next day received the Congress Award.

Makoto Hayasaka presented during the Congress his own book about Belarus, "History of the Borderland: reflections on Belarus' history.". It was the first such book in Japanese; he spoke about the persecution of Uniates in the southern Padlašša/Podlasie region during the Russian empire times.

Swetlana Czerwonnaja from the Nicolaus Copernikus University in Toruń directed the public's attention to the image of Belarusians in the literary legacy of the Polish writer Jozef Mackiewicz.

The next three lectures involved the history of the Belarusian diaspora and the Council of the Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR Rada). **Dorota Michaluk** spoke about the BNR diplomatic missions in the Baltic states. **Natalla Hardzijenka** focused on the foreign policy activities of the BNR Rada in the years 1940-1950, and **Eriks Jekabsons** reported about the situation of Latvia's Belarusian minority in the years 1918-1940.

On the Congress' second day the section was divided into two separate parts. I was given the chance to coordinate the work of the part of section dealing with Belarus' history as a part of Russian empire. My first personal feelings were: we succeeded. The participants met not due to some formal reason, but precisely because the section's topic was touching them. All participants of the section represented various scholarly communities; one felt that they need space for evaluating the history of the 19th century (obviously, in a somewhat wider chronological measure, i.e. until the First World War.

As a rule, Belarusian scholarly conferences cover very wide chronological ranges; they often deal with a certain area, yet in most cases one practically doesn't get a chance to speak longer than 5-10 minutes (especially in the case of the young researchers) . In our section every participant was allowed half an hour for presentation and discussion.

My second remark was about the fact that most participants were very young researchers.

The continuity of generations in researching such an important period as the 19th century is a very substantial factor. Every new generation of researchers reads and evaluates their sources differently (even those known for a

long time); it finds something new, and, naturally offers a completely original view on a given theme.

The third obvious moment is the researchers' "self-inclusion" in their problems. Virtually every speaker attempted to reply at length to sometimes very complicated questions; long discussion followed almost every appearance.

Like in the common Friday conference, mini-presentations of two books took place in our section. **Dzmitry Matviejčyk** spoke about the post-November emigration from the Belarusian and Lithuanian lands in 1830 -1870s. This was precisely the basic topic of his monograph "Exile from the native land. The post-November emigration from Belarus and Lithuania (1830-1870)," published in 2011. Professor **Viačaslaŭ Šved** pointed out the common efforts of Belarusians and Poles to revive the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. He recalled his book, published a few years ago, and dedicated to the ideas' evolution in Belarus in this particular period. **Siarhiej Astankovič** spoke about one untypical "West-Russian" figure of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century — **Apanas Jaruševič**, whose creative legacy has been insufficiently studied by the scholars. **Pilip Niekraševič** devoted his presentation to peculiarities of the Russian authority's military policy in Belarusian gubernias in 1815 -1830. **Vadzim Viaryha** directed the listeners' attention to the issue of youth participation in the sociopolitical movements at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, while **Ksienia Cieraškova** — to the social mobility of burghers. The agrarian Russification of the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century as one phase of the Russification policies of the imperial authorities was the main topic of **Vital Kirylenka**'s presentation. The focus on social issues was continued by **Uladzislaŭ Rut** (he spoke about the problem of alcohol misuse in a landowners' village in the middle of the 19th century), and by **Viktar Kachnovič**, who is very attentively studying Radziwills' private forest economy in the 19th century. My lecture was of a rather conceptual nature and dealt with the "West-Rus'ism" as an ideological problem.

Unfortunately, **Ihar Zaprudski** was not able to participate in the section's work; he was another recipient of the Congress Award for his monograph "On the way to Parnassus: attributional research and reception issues of Belarusian literature of the 19th century. " His topic was directly connected with the anniversary of the 1863 Uprising and with the personality of Kastuś Kalinoŭski. A preswentation on this event should have been delivered during the Congress. As a result , the Uprising was mentioned only in separate remarks; it seems to me that this was the only flaw in the work of our section.

The participants promoted the idea of a separate section on the 19th century history in the next Congress. Researchers were clearly lacking the opportunity of discussing such problems in an academic style on a very high level. It's also worthwhile to begin thinking about inviting historians from other countries. However, on the other hand, precisely the Belarusian scholars are interested in creating such a place for conducting "internal" discussions. One should note the very favorable attitude of the Lithuanian partners to the Congress, as well as the friendly atmosphere of the city of Kaunas. It is precisely the atmosphere that sometimes contributes to a useful analysis of the very remote past.

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Dorota Michaluk: Only Knowledge of Belarusian Scholarly Literature and Language Offers a Chance for Deep Understanding of Belarus-related Topics

*The Third International Congress of Belarusian Studies was held in Kaunas on 11 -13 October, 2013. Numerous well-known scholars from over 20 countries participated in this event. Dr. hab. **Dorota Michaluk**, from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, deputy chief editor of the journal **Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne** shares her impressions from the Congress.*



Dr. Dorota Michaluk

Belarusian Review: *You have participated in the International Congress of Belarusian Studiess for the second time. What are your impressions?*

Dorota Michaluk: Yes, I attended the International Congress of Belarusian Studies, for the second time. My impressions from this year's event are good. I heard many interesting presentations in several sections. It's obvious, though, that with such a number of simultaneous sections, and accompanying events (exhibitions, book presentations) it is impossible to visit everything. Yet, this is, after all, the idea of he Congress. One must choose.

BR: *What did you like, and what you did not like about the Congress?*

DM: I very much liked my section, organized by Andrzej Tichomirow and Dr. Tomasz Blaszczak**;** it stood out by a high level of discussions, and professionalism. The Congress also gave an excellent opportunity to meet in one place my colleagues from many countries of the world.

I am glad to have had the opportunity to meet in person many people I had previously known only from the scholarly literature. A very good initiative was introducing the Congress Awards for the best scholarly works in individual scientific disciplines. I also admired the organizers, for having managed so successfully organize this enormous event. Here the credit is due to several dozens of persons, specifically engaged in this effort . On the other hand, I did not much like the panel opening the Congress. The lectures were superficial, and excessively conceptual. They clearly showed that without the knowledge of Belarusian scholarly literature and the Belarusian language it is impossible to conduct research on Belarusian topics in any field, since only this knowledge offers a chance for deep understanding of the given topic.

BR: *How do you evaluate the choice of Kaunas as the venue for the Congress?*

DM: I don't know the background of choosing precisely Kaunas as the venue of the Congress. Most likely, in this case the decisive role belonged to direct contacts and the readiness to support this project by the the Vytautas (Lithuanian for *Vitaŭt*) Magnus University in Kaunas, as well as by the city's authorities and the local scholarly environment. Such multifaceted cooperation always brings good results. As for me personally, Kaunas perfectly fits this role with its chamber atmosphere and short distances between university buildings, in which the work of various sections is conducted. One can get anywhere on foot and easy meet colleagues. After all, Kaunas fits well the traditions of Belarusian-Lithuanian cooperation. In the interwar period there was here a large Belarusian minority; it was the seat of the emigre government of the Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR). An essential trace in the city's architecture was left by the well-known Belarusian architect Klaudzi Duž-Dušeŭski.

BR: *How would you evaluate the contents and results of work in your section?*

DM: I took part in the work of the seventh section, entitled "Belarusians as minority and diaspora in the XX-XXI centuries." We have analyzed the national transformations, and the Belarusian minority in various countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Czechoslovakia). Very interesting discussions took place, since many presentations dealt with similar topics, and their content was on a very good scholarly level. I had the opportunity to hear the winner of the Congresss Award in the field of history Dr. Dzianis Lisiejčykaŭ who appeared in our section. As far as results are concerned, the most important was the opportunity to exchange ideas and share results of our research; this always brings a new inspiration. My overall impression is that many interesting young scholars now appeared in the field of history; they already achieved good scholarly records and have great passion for research.

*Interview was conducted by **Kiryl Kaścian***

Thoughts & Observations

Belarus and Visa Liberalization With the European Union

By Pavel Usov

The Third Eastern Partnership summit was held in Vilnius on November 28-29, 2013. In the context of relations between Belarus and the European Union as the main result of the summit one may consider the declaration of Belarus' Foreign Minister Uladzimier Makiej on the country's readiness to begin negotiations on simplifying the visa regime with countries of the European Union. ***Belarusian Review*** asked the well-known Belarusian analyst Pavel Usov, to comment on these declarations of the Belarusian authorities.

Pavel Usov: "Before analyzing the essence of Belarusian declarations during the Eastern Partnership's summit in Vilnius, one should notice, that recent events in Ukraine pushed to the backburner the summit itself, all its declarations, as well as the Belarusian issue. Attention of both the East and West was attracted to Kyiv's Euromaidan, whose results may change the geopolitical situation in the region for many years. Belarus is becoming a hostage of these results — both in the positive and negative sense. If the Ukrainian regime succeeds, the Eurasian integration will acquire additional impetus and intensity, and Russia's influence will be strengthened to an incredible extent. If Ukraine succeeds in turning to the West (which, in my opinion, is not likely), then Russia's pressure on Belarus will increase manifold. There will remain no possibilities of development in another direction. And the more Minsk bargains with the West, — and beyond these games there is no real desire to balance the external policy, — the less time remains for Belarus, while its dependency from Russia is growing. Therefore, some declarations on simplification of the visa regime in conditions of deepening integration with Russia, appear ridiculous and senseless.

I personally believe little in some declarations and promises made by representatives of Belarusian authorities. In the last 20 years a specific political culture took shape in the country; politicians' words, regardless of their number and loudness, have no meaning. Makei's declarations are nothing else, than an element of a prolonged political game with the West. The essence of this game is reduced to simple words: "we promise, and you lift the sanctions. " In other words, Europe should pay for Belarusian intentions.

In general, the liberalization should be a part of the process of warming relations with the West, domestic democratization, and a wider development of the European vector. However, Lukashenka's behavior proves that any-serious review of Belarus' external policy strategy is not going to take place. Moreover, I can state that Belarusian authorities are no more in a position to perform it.

Makei's declarations in Vilnius represent an attempt to keep up the dialogue with the European Union, to force the Union to undertake further concessions, and to abolish the sanctions. Minsk is creating an illusion of negotiations, not based on any observed real actions. According to common logic, the visa liberalization concerns interests of the Belarusian society. With presence of good will, this issue , as well as that of small border traffic, may be solved in several days. However, Belarusian authorities are consciously not doing it, naively believing that it is precisely the West who is interested in all this, and not the other way around. Therefore, this trade recalls an old Soviet saying: 'to spite the conductor, I will buy the ticket, and then walk.' When other countries are exerting all their efforts to simplify visa relations with the West, Belarus is doing the opposite.

Here we may also find certain logic of the Lukashenka's regime. Intensification of Belarusian citizens' travels abroad will help in transforming Belarusian society's worldview. Of course, I would not exaggerate the effect of foreign travels on forming the political culture. However, there is no other explanation why Minsk is sabotaging the visa liberalization. Therefore, most likely, all that was declared in Vilnius, will also remain in Vilnius."

Belarusian Studies in France: A Lost Cause?

By Virginie Symaniec

In the 1990s , a student wishing to submit a dissertation topic or thesis on Belarus in France faced a real obstacle course. Before describing the problem he/she had chosen to work on, he/she was obliged to respond to numerous and varied questions, sometimes remote from scholarly considerations. Does Belarus exist? Does the Belarusian language exist? Is the "Byelorussian" similar to Russian? Can we still not say that Belarus is Poland? Can we still not say that Belarus is Russia? These questions and the virulence with which they were sometimes asked unveiled a tense political and ideological context, probably unique to French academic circles, where "sovietologists" were used to study the concepts of the USSR and Russia in a strictly equal ratio, and where the gap between supporters and opponents of the Soviet Union lost de facto all reality when facing speeches that could jeopardize the unity of the so called "Eastern Slavic family."

"Belarusian studies" were to be created completely from the ground, in circles that were mainly against the principle of "areal studies" and in a situation where there was almost no French literature on the subject. Anyone wishing to study Belarus — therefore, also wishing to study Belarusian language —, could be suspected of belonging to the camp of "nationalist separatists". The choice of language was considered as crucial in the assessment of the "objectivity" (choice of Russian) or the "subjectivity" (choice of Belarusian) of the young apprentice teacher or researcher.

Besides, in an environment that was often wrongly described as strictly Jacobin and "revolutionary", but that was more often really influenced by the French imperial traditions, the reproach of *indigénophilie* was often associated with an intention of "political offense", that was barring the way to all pedagogical approaches as well as basic research on the subject. It should be remembered that in the 1990s, basic researches in French on Belarus were dated from 1930 (Martel & Jobert).

That's why young researchers created in 1996 *Perspectives biélorussiennes*, an independent organization for research, information and culture on Belarus. Main objectives of the members of this organization were to broadcast information in French on this country, from their field of experience. Members were aware of the fact that the main goal of their work was to legitimate Belarus as a subject of knowledge. During a decade, this scholarly organization has contributed so much to unite and form those who have now become the best French specialists of the question that it was possible to hear that a specific "French school" on Belarus was functioning in France. All these pioneers in the hexagonal context were able to support their theses, causing precedents in various and prestigious institutions as Sciences Po Paris, University of Paris III - Sorbonne Nouvelle or the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences. The disciplines involved in their work were political science, sociology, history and "cultural history". Unlike most of their elders, they were all formed for conducting research by using at least two or three languages from the former Soviet bloc. Often brilliant, they all were also fellows of the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Defense. It was most important that they were not all from Belarusian origin, which was stressing that the understanding of this country had a chance to be no longer seen as a matter of blood. Their scholarly advances were also made in parallel to the increase of the number of students interested in the topic. They all seemed, at that time, to have been promised successful careers in the institutions of the Republic.

However, for obvious political reasons, the vast majority of these researchers never received a position, at least in France. Those who obtained a position are no more publishing on Belarus today: a topic that again seems to jeopardize any positive developments in their careers. Political reasons, as well as social and economic factors, seem essential for explaining the shortness of breath of Belarussian studies in France. Main changes are still indexed on the more general state of Slavic Studies, on the one hand; on the internal political development of Belarus and Russia, on the other hand. The massive non-renewal of teaching positions after retirement and the new phenomenon of insecurity currently faced by overqualified people who had planned to make a scientific career in France — it's now officially known that more than 70% of graduates will never find a scientific position — has negative and harmful consequences far beyond the question of the development of Belarusian studies.

The strides made in the 1990s, and the subsequent opening to the East following fall of the Berlin Wall has stopped in the early 2000s. Independent French researchers also have been increasingly isolated since 2006 — a year cor-

responding to a further escalation of violence in Belarus, particularly during the election period. They sometimes tried somehow to continue their researches without actually affording it, and they were often forced by necessity to abandon their works to find other means of survival. The main consequence of this situation is that the French government is nowadays currently in the process of losing specialists it has itself helped to form throughout the 1990s — mainly people who have seen the rise of dictatorship in Belarus and who are capable of explaining it, not from ideological opinions but from their experience in the field. One may crudely pose the question of a break in the transmission of knowledge so dearly earned by researchers trained in the 1990s and who are often considered subversive. For Belarusian studies to be developed in France, the government should also sustain strategies of long-term education requiring double language skills, in addition to learning theoretical and methodological aspects specific to more than one discipline. We are aware of the fact that it is certainly costly. Meanwhile, despite of the efforts of a generation, it is clear that Belarusian studies still have no institutional value in France. One may only hope that, pending a resolution of these problems, knowledge will continue to be transmitted less formally. But what a waste of time and potential!

The State of Researching Belarusians' History in Latvia

By Ēriks Jēkabsons

Already at the end of the 19th century Belarusians comprised a considerable part of population of Latgalia (Eastern Latvia) ; in the interwar period their number oscillated between 75 thousand in 1920 and 27 thousand in 1935. Without trying to determine in this text the causes of such drastic changes in the number of Belarusians, we will limit ourselves to stating that, in any case, Belarusians have comprised about 2-4% of the population of independent Latvia; moreover they have developed an active social life. Today, Latvia's Belarusians represent the country's numerically second largest national minority; as result the history of this minority is now acquiring special significance.

Fullfledged research of of Belarusians'history in Latvia could begin only after the renewal of independence of Latvian state in the beginning of the 1990s — with the opening of archives and libraries for researchers and the possibility of publicizing materials, found there.

First to tackle this task was the experienced scholar and former historian of Latvian communist movement — professor **Ilga Apine**. Her work resulted in the first general survey of history and current situation of Latvia's Belarusians in a separate research work [1] On the whole a small, yet important book lists correctly the main stages of development and activity of the Belarusian minority (true, the author amazes by her statement that ancestors of Latvia's indigenous Belarusians arived here in 10-11th centuries as Kryvichy , and had for all following centuries preserved their language and traditions, while living in full isolation from surrounding processes, which, of course, is impossible). The main drawback of the book and several articles by I. Apine on Belarusian topics [2] is the complete absence of utilized archival materials.



Dr. Eriks Jekabsons

In the middle of 1990s a number of articles were published by the historian **Eriks Jekabsons** on Latvia's relations with the Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR) in 1919-20s, and also on activities of the conditionally Belarusian military unit commanded by Stanislau Bulak-Balachovic in Latvia in the beginning of 1920. The articles were fully based on heretofore unutilized archival materials from Latvia and Poland, and actually dealt with an issue, until then completely unknown in Latvia's history (later these materials were publicized also in Poland and Belarus). [3]

Afterwards scholarly editions in Latvia and Belarus have published a number of aticles by the same author on history of the Belarusian minority during Latvia's indendence in years 1918-1940[4], on repressions of Belarusians in Soviet Latvia in years 1940-1945 [5], and the Belarusian minority's activity during the German-Fascist occupation [6], main source of which were also primarily archival materials.

Besides all mentioned above, in 2012 graduated from the Latvian University **Kaciaryna Kazaconak**, who wrote and very successfully defended her magisterial dissertatuin on the topic " The Belarusian minority in the Latvian Republic in years 1918-1940: example of the activity of Kastus Jezavitau" (scholarly director — professor Eriks Jekabsons), which since served as basis for several scholarly articles. [7] Considering the place of the dissertation's defense, the use of Latvian sources, and her change of permanent residence to Latvia, K. Kazaconak may be partly considered a representative of the Latvian historiography

Despite the mentioned published works by Latvian historians, it' worthwhile noting that deep research of Latvia's Belarusian minority is still ahead of us, and ideally should be conducted in cooperation with Belarusian historians.

Ēriks Jēkabsons is Doctor of History and associate professor at the University of Latvia (Riga)

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MEDIA WATCH

'If Russia Disappeared Tomorrow,' Belarusians Say They Wouldn't Feel a Loss

By Paul Goble

Staunton, November 17 – Many in both Moscow and the West assume that Russia and Belarus are "practically a single country" and that their populations are so similar as to make their fusion into a single one inevitable. But, as a survey of Belarusian opinion shows, it is one thing for leaders to proclaim unity and quite another for the two peoples to feel it.

"Russky reporter," decided to find out just how Belarusians feel about Russia and their connections with it by sending "almost 200 young journalists" to talk to residents of the Belarusian capital in the course of one day. The Moscow journal has now published a selection of their responses (rusrep.ru/article/2013/11/05/minsk24).

While this survey by its very nature cannot claim to be representative of all the residents of Mensk let alone of Belarusians outside of that city, its findings are clear: Many Belarusians do not feel especially close or attached to the Russian Federation and now look westward rather than eastward for their futures.

Asked what connects him with Russia, a lycee student said that nothing really did at a personal level, although he acknowledged that perhaps the supply of gas did link his country with it. "I do not feel attached to Russia: I don't even have any relatives in that neighboring country."

And when he was asked how he would be affected if "Russia suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth," the lycee student said he was sure he would lose "many topics for conversation because the theme of relations between Russian and Belarus is always being discussed iin society. But that would be about it."

Many of the Belarusians with whom the Russian journalists spoke insisted that there country was Belarus and not Belorussia, as Russians call it. When people use the latter, they are being insulting and referring to a place that "doesn't exist." Most said that the union state with Russia "exists only on paper," and many viewed Russia as being "almost as far away as China."

The Russian journalists who came to Mensk assumed they were returning to a Soviet place, given that there is "a dictator – father Lukashenka, censorship, political prisoners, the KGB, prohibited rock groups, and other things" which recall the pre-1991 world. But they found other things as well, including hostility to Moscow and Russians.

For many Belarusians, the Russian journalists conclude, there exists "a mark of equivalence between Moscow and the entire country," with judgments about Russia reflecting Russian television programs about crime and corruption in

the Russian capital, features that Belarusians increasingly assume are typical of Russia as a whole.

Belarusians and Russians do share a common language. Indeed, "the percent of people speaking correct Russian" is higher in Belarus or in Ukraine. But, the Russian journalists say, "there is the feeling that for Belarusians, the Russian language is not associated directly with Russia."

Many Belarusians have lived and worked in Moscow or elsewhere in the Russian Federation in the past, another unifying feeling. But ever fewer have been doing so in recent years given that Russian firms have replaced increasingly expensive Belarusian workers with cheaper ones from Central Asia.

In addition, the two nations are united by "the cult of Victory" in World War II and by classical Russian culture. "But," the journalists say, "the more new musical groups, directors and writers are born, the more we will be separated from one another. If, of course, we do not begin to build anew a single country, not at the level of presidents but at the level of people."

The "Russky reporter" article features numerous quotations from Belarusians. How typical any one of them is is impossible to say, but collectively they present a very different picture of Belarusian society than is normally offered by the Moscow media or accepted as true by Russian and Western audiences.

Among some of the most interesting:

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A Belarusian biker said he had taken Russian citizenship to buy property but that that didn't mean he was connected with Russia. He indicated he much prefers to be part of a small state, not one whose "greatness consists in its possession of nuclear weapons."

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A post office worker said she didn't want to see the two countries unite because she was sure that would harm Belarus. "I do not want this," she added.

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A bank employee said he thought that Russia and Belarus would eventually be united, but he suggested that is because Russia needs Belarus as much as the reverse: "Russia depends on Belarus; we are after all the geographic center of Europe, and Russia needs a place des armes." He said that when he visits Moscow he doesn't feel "alien" but he does feel that he is "in an alien country" where "you ar alone and no one will help you."

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A young worker at a café said that he was "against Russia" because its "policy toward Belarus is dishonest: [the Russians] come and buy up everything."

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Another worker said "nothing except language connects me with Russia. Or almost nothing: I have a Russian mother and a Russian father ... or is it that he was only born in Russia?"

A roofer said "it would be better if we integrated with Europe and not with Russia." Twice, he said, Russians had "seized everything," once during the Russian Empire and then in the USSR. He said that because the Soviets called Belarus Belorussia, it was critically important for everyone to call it Belarus now. "What kind of Belorussia are we if we are Belarus?"

Source: Window on Eurasia: November 17, 2013

Lukashenka Rotates Staff to 'Zero Out' Economic Policy Failures

President Alexander Lukashenka issued a strict disciplinary warning to the Presidential Administration Head Andrei Kobyakov and dismissed Presidential Administration Deputy Head Andrei Tur. He also dismissed Boris Batura from his office at Minsk Oblast Executive Committee and appointed him to direct Borisovdrev.

Lukashenka has shifted the blame for failed economic policies onto executives. He wants to open a 'new page' in economic policies ahead of the 2015 election campaign and therefore reshuffles staff in his administration. While he uses harsh rhetoric about criminally prosecuting executives in order to improve his approval rating, he will not necessarily go ahead with his threats.

Due to the difficult economic situation, president Lukashenka is seeking ways to motivate state officials. Modernization projects have failed and money has been spent inefficiently. There is no external funding, and administrative methods for managing the economy have not brought positive results. In 2013, the GDP grew by circa 1 %, exports fell by 20 % and industrial production fell by 15%. Belarus has no resources to restore its previous rate of economic development.

The Belarusian authorities are not ready to reform the existing socio- economic model. After the IMF mission left, the country's economic development plans for 2014 were readjusted with more optimistic figures. President Lukashenka resumed his traditional practices in economic management: staff reshuffles and threats of criminal prosecution in order to 'increase' the efficiency of industrial modernization. His approach will bring certain short-term results, but in the long-term will not solve all the problems in public management.

The president's staff policy is based on constant rotation of managers at all levels of government. Thus he prevents sustainable regional clans or relations from being formed, and restricts the authority and influence of officials from growing. In addition, the president's tough rhetoric in relation to the officials evokes positive emotions in the electorate, who are happy to be given a scapegoat.

President Lukashenka has launched serious staff shifts, which may affect the government's composition, including the presidential administration management. As soon as the presidential campaign kicks off, Lukashenka will shift the blame for economic policy failures onto state officials.

Source: Solidarity with Belarus Information Office, 12 November .2013

Belarus' Woodwork Industry could be Modernized, but only by Private Investors

Following Lukashenko's visit to the Borisov woodworks last week, the company's management and regional administration head have resigned.

The government has chosen the woodwork industry as a promising avenue for modernization. Although additional funds have failed to improve the industry's financial performance, woodwork remains a promising industry for modernization which could be carried out by private investors. However Belarus' government wants to remain the key player.

About 39% of Belarus is covered with forests, i.e. it has enough natural resources for woodworking. Exports of wood and products made of wood in 2012 exceeded USD 500 million and Belarus has a good potential for import substitution at circa USD 200 million per year (calculation is based on 2012 data). Belarus imported circa USD 100 million worth of woodchip boards in 2012 and in the future it aims to replace these imports entirely with domestic products.

The exact amounts allocated for the woodworking industry modernization are difficult to calculate, but Belarus has imported woodwork equipment worth at least USD 500 million. Some modernization loans date back to 2008-2009 and have not been repaid in full until now. The industry's financial situation is critical: woodworking has been making profits only in May 2013. Compared with 2012, industry's loss-making in 2013 increased by 2.4 times. New production lines have been launched, but imports of woodchip boards have not reduced.

In addition, there is a huge difference between how private and state woodworks develop. In Smorgon region, the privately-owned Kronospan woodworks is expanding according to a development plan, it produces goods for exports and for domestic consumption, and does not require constant monitoring by the head of state. State-owned woodworks companies are not developing so well. In general, state-owned woodworks have failed to implement modernization: imported technical equipment does not meet the technical requirements and is often stored outdoors. The only positive exception is Ivatsevichi woodworks, which has strengthened its exports on the Russian market.

Recent practices show that the state is unable to carry out effective modernization at state-owned woodworks due to the lack of incentives. Private enterprises can be successful, but that only shows the inefficiency of state ownership in this industry, which is unacceptable for the authorities.

Source: Solidarity with Belarus Information Office, 12 November .2013

Announcements, Projects

Belarusian Review Announces the Launch of the Special Issue on Jews in Belarus

Preface

Kiryl Kascian, Hanna Vasilevich

Historically Belarus accommodated people of different nationalities. One of the most profound places in its ethnic mosaic belongs to Jews, an ethnic community that for centuries formed an unalienable part of the Belarusian society. In October 2013 the section *The Jewish Community in Central-Eastern Europe* conducted its work as a part of the Third Congress of Belarusian Studies in Kaunas.

Hereby we are announcing the launch of our new project that is to be embodied in the form of a special issue of Belarusian Review devoted to the world of Belarusian Jews. This project is based on the results of the work of the section devoted to Jews at the Third Congress of Belarusian Studies. It is initiated by our colleagues and contributing editors Zachar Sybieka and Leonid Smilovitsky from the University of Tel Aviv.

Introduction

Leonid Smilovitsky, Zachar Šybieka (Tel-Aviv)

The Third Congress of Belarusian Studies took place in October 2013 in the city of Kaunas (Lithuania). This time it attracted over 400 participants from various countries of the world. For the first time in its history the Congress hosted a section entitled *The Jewish Community in Central-Eastern Europe* which jointly worked with the section *Urban life in Central-Eastern Europe*. 10 scholars responded to the invitation to participate in the section. Belarus was represented by Professor Aleś Smaliančuk, Dr. Andrei Kishtymau, Dr. Aliaksei Bratachkin, Dr. Volha Sabaleuskaya, the well-known ethnographer and photo-artist Alexander Litin, postgraduates Marharyta Karzhaneuskaya and Yanina Karpenkina, Israel – by professor Zachar Šybieka, Poland – by Dr. Jerzy Garbinski, Ukraine – by Dr. Volodymyr Goncharov.

According to their topics the presentations were divided in three groups: 1. *The problem of memory of Belarusian Jews*, 2. *The Life of the Jewish community in Belarus in the 18th – early 20th century*, and 3. *Economic activities of Belarusian Jews in the 18th – early 20th century*. Delivered presentations elicited great interest; participants from the other sections of the Congress came to listen to them. The section's work revealed that studies of Belarusian Jewish history along with Jews themselves are increasingly attracting ethnic Belarusians. The participants decided to organize a section on Belarus' Judaica on every scheduled Congress of Belarusian Studies. The idea to publish the section's presentations in their full versions in a separate volume was expressed as it is not possible to accomplish this goal within the limits of publishing materials of the entire Congress.

Such a possibility now arose due to the good favor of the editorial staff of quarterly *Belarusian Review*; it agreed to accept the materials, translate them into English, and publish as a journal's special issue. The process of preliminary scholarly editing is being conducted by Professor Zachar Sybieka and Dr. Leonid Smilovitsky.

Belarusian Jewish studies: the current state and the prospects of development

Leonid Smilovitsky, Zachar Šybieka (Tel-Aviv)

In this article the necessity of studying the Belarusian Jewish studies has been justified and its contents were defined. As the basis of this study served the bibliography composed in the last 20 years by Leonid Smilovitsky and supplemented by Zachar Šybieka. Conditions, achievements and peculiarities of the Belarusian Jewish Studies were defined since its emergence in the middle of the 19th century until present.

Following stages of development are distinguished: the pre-Soviet (before 1917), period of the Belarusian Democratic Republic and the struggle for an independent Belarus (1918-1921), period of Soviet liberalization of the 1920s, the interwar Soviet period (1921-1941), the war-time period (1941-1945), the postwar period (1945-1991), the Republic Belarus period (since 1991).

Achievements of the foreign Belarusian Jewish studies were analyzed for the first time (publications made in Israel, Poland, Germany, USA, United Kingdom, and Canada). The most and the least developed topics are depicted. The authors concluded that the Belarusian Jewish studies, as a separate dimension of the Belarusian historiography, acquired its initial shape in the beginning of the new 21st century. Reasons for its relative lagging in comparison with other countries are shown. The article ends with an analysis of further perspectives of Jewish studies in the Republic Belarus.

The Holocaust in the oral history of Belarusians

Aleś Smalianĉuk (Warsaw)

The presentation is based on materials acquired from oral history expeditions in various regions of Belarus, during which primarily autobiographic memoirs were recorded; along with them, the question about causes of Holocaust was often asked *("Why did the Germans kill Jews?")*.

The events of Holocaust left a strong trace in the memory of Belarus' inhabitants. The total destruction of a large ethnic group by the Nazis bore a defensive reaction of the human consciousness.

People had to generate their own assessment and understand the causes of Holocaust as well as to define their own attitudes concerning the Jewish tragedy. In similar situations a person often develops his/her own view taking into account the position of the social, religious, national, or other group he/she is identified with.

The oral memories of inhabitants of Belarusian villages create a fairly realistic image of the occupation. They lack one-sidedness in dealing with "ours" and "theirs". One perceives a rather critical attitude to "ours". One may conclude that oral memories reveal the strength of stereotypes including the image of a passive victim incapable of resistance, the cowardliness of Jews, the unquestionable tolerance of Belarusians' attitude toward Jews in the interwar period, etc. Even now, these stereotypes continue affecting the mass consciousness.

Memory of the Holocaust and the Jewish identity in Belarus after 1991

Aliaksei Bratachkin (Minsk)

Attention to the issue of the Holocaust in Belarus became possible only after the second half of 1980s, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The attention of international community, scholarly organizations and charitable foundations made great influence on this process.

Having lost 80% of its Jewish population during the Holocaust, Belarus did not stay aside. The problems of preserving this tragedy became an integral part of Belarus' national memory. At the end of the first decade of 2000s two approaches to the issue Holocaust in Belarus emerged: from actual ignorance in the official discourse to the establishment of independent research by a part of Belarusian historians. The author undertook an analysis of the social-political, political, cultural, demographic context of the memory about the Catastrophe of Eastern European Jews on the example of Belarus. Attention is drawn to the effect of the Holocaust memory on the definition of the Jewish identity in Belarus.

Jewish material heritage (synagogues, cemeteries, etc.) in the cultural landscape of post-Soviet Belarus: the fate, current status and value

Jerzy Garbinski (Lublin)

The author defines the state of research of the issue: level of its scrutiny, causes of lacking complex research, issue of listing and cataloguing the Jewish material heritage in Belarus. The fate of the synagogues and Jewish necropoles in Belarus is shown: during the Second World War (1939-1945) and in the postwar period – during the USSR existence (1945-1991) and after its collapse (1991-2012). Semantics of the signification of the synagogue in Belarus' cultural landscape is being revealed: within limits of own (Jewish) tradition; the semantic range of perceiving the synagogue by neighbors from other confessions ("foreign"). Author concludes that the Jewish material heritage should be perceived (and is already perceived) as an inalienable part of Belarus' history and an essential component of its cultural landscape. A transformation is taking place from the traditional perception of the Jewish heritage ("neither foreign, nor ours") into its perception as "ours"/"not foreign", Belarusian and common to all mankind. The article concludes with raising the issue of preserving the Jewish heritage in Belarus.

Jews on the photos of Mahilioŭ region in the 20th century

Alexander Litin

The author presents his personal collection of Jewish photographs from the Mahilioŭ region made since the beginning of photo artistry until today. Based on the analysis of this unique collection the author distinguishes

basic stages and peculiarities of photo artistry in the region of Mahilioŭ. The article lists concrete persons and shows distinct features of their creative style. Author proves the existence of the Mahilioŭ school of photography formed mainly by masters of Jewish ethnicity. The author is the first in stressing the importance of the regional principle in studying photo-materials, as it allows their complete listing and defining local peculiarities.

Jewish agricultural colonies of Belarus and Ukraine in the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries: comparative analysis

Volodymyr Goncharov

Due to existing historical circumstances, in the 19th century Jews represented the most numerous ethnic groups of Belarus' and Ukraine's population, who substantially influenced economic structures of these regions of the Russian Empire. The czarist government's policy is analyzed in relation to Jews wishing to participate in agricultural production; the article broaches the history of beginnings of Jewish agricultural colonies in Belarus and Ukraine. The author reveals peculiarities in the worldview and mentality of the Jewish population in Belarus and Ukraine, and its mutual relations with these countries' titular nations. Agricultural skills acquired by Jews were used during the colonization of Palestine at the turn of 19th and 20th centuries. At the same time a general conclusion is reached concerning czarist government's inconsequential and controversial policies concerning Jews of the Pale of Settlement who desired to become equal participants in the agrarian sector of the Russian Empire's economy.

The Jewish trade in Belarus at the end of the 18th to the early 20th century

Emmanuil Ioffe (Minsk)

The article is dedicated to the history of Jewish trade in the Belarusian lands at the end of the 18th – beginning of the 20th century. It examines the main directions, most important peculiarities, distinct features, techniques and methods of the Jewish trade, as well as branches of trade in which Jewish merchants maintained their priority. The article contains interesting statistical data. Its preparation was based on various sources in Belarusian, Russian, German and Polish languages.

Jews in the economy of Belarus in the late 18th - early 20th century: on the issue statement

Andrei Kishtymau

The study is based on abundant and varied sources. The author defines the degree to which the topic is being researched and rejects any extreme interpretations in treating the role of Jews in Belarus' economic development at the end of 18th – beginning of the 20th centuries. The author attempts to generate a balanced assessment of this role. He comes to the conclusion that Jewish business activities were a part of the economic system that objectively took shape on the Belarusian lands at that time. This is why he rejects any accusations of Jews in the economic domination and exploitation of "Christians". At the same time the author does not agree with authors who exaggerate the pauperization of Jewish population and shows that the economic well-being of Jews in general was higher than that of Belarusian farmers. The summary indicates that Jewish business activities had a beneficial effect on the development of Belarus' economy.

The unusual journeys of Hrodna Jews in the 19th - early 20th century

Volha Sabaleuskaya

The text is dedicated to defining the role of travels in the Jewish culture in the Belarusian part of Jewish Pale of Settlement (end of 18th – beginning of 20th century). On the basis of archival sources and memoir literature the article analyzes the essence of relations between the czarist administration attitudes to the high degree of mobility of the Jewish population, as well as the policy of compulsory deportations within the boundaries of Belarusian gubernias. The "nomadic" nature of the Jewish people had largely defined the life of the Russian Empire's Pale of Settlement. Due to this characteristic Jews were able to unite various parts of economy (agriculture, trade, crafts, and finance) and territories (urban and rural settlements), generate impetus to the economy of the agricultural civilization by introducing innovations, and support the development of trade and services. The article concludes that the Jewish community's mobility strengthened discrimination of Jews as an ethno-confessional minority, while their "love of changing places" occupied an important place in the structure of negative ethnic stereotypes concerning Jews in the Christians' consciousness.

A Jewish woman in the transformation of the traditional way of life in the Hrodna province in the late 19th – early 20th Century

Marharyta Karzhaneuskaya (Hrodna)

The article describes the social position of Jewish woman in the second half of the 18th – beginning of the 20th century. Under the influence of social-economic, political and cultural processes in the Russian Empire in that period, a certain transformation of the gender stereotype of female behavior was taking place. It also affected the formerly closed Jewish society.

A special attention is paid to defining the Jewish woman's place in the economy, social life, and education. Based on the studied documents, the author observes the longing of girls of Jewish religion for education in elementary and mid-level educational institutions – both state-sponsored and private. A new phenomenon, growing in popularity in the cities and towns of the Hrodna province, was the opening of female religious schools or female classes with men's schools (Cheders and Talmud Torah schools).

The Jewish children's world in the 19th century's Belarus through the prism of memories

Yanina Karpenkina

The author defines characteristic features of life and inner world of Jewish children. Her article deals with the everyday childhood; it examines the life of Jewish children in the indicated period. The childhood of a 19th century Jewish child in general resembles the childhood of a representative of any other traditional society (strictness of education with frequent use of physical penalty,

high authority of parents, and high degree of religiosity in education). At the same time it is stressed that the 19th century Jewish childhood has a great number of peculiarities specific only to this ethnic community; they are, first of all, connected with the Jewish religion. Among such peculiarities one may list the following features: Cheder education from the very early age (3-5 years); the child's religious worldview and specific dreams associated with this worldview; tradition of early weddings that did not correspond to the person's intellectual and emotional maturity; a distinct perception of time within the framework of tradition; collection of "popular" Jewish games absent in the Belarusian tradition; the "childish" ceremonial nature of religious holidays (prescriptions and prohibitions during the children's holidays, traditions of observing holidays). Moreover, interethnic relations between Belarusian and Jewish children are analyzed. The author concludes that, for arranging successful communications with Jews Belarusians should consider the peculiarities of Jewish education that has been affecting the national character of representatives of the Jewish nation.

Journalist and Writer Natalka Babina Unveils Modern-day Belarus in Her Novel *Down Among the Fishes*

By Glagoslav Publications

Until now poorly represented in the Western part of the world, Belarusian literary voice gets a chance to open up about the real state of things in this corner of Eastern Europe

Today mostly associated with the personality of President Lukashenka, Belarus remains a terra incognita for the rest of the world. Babina's surprisingly fresh portrait of today's Belarus celebrates the country's diverse demographics be it business, education, culture or just the way people go about their daily errands.

Natalka Babina created a novel to celebrate the unseen in the country where people had to learn to exist 'backstage'. In the novel, the author writes about her homeland where, contrary to commonly spread stereotypes, people do enjoy a fulfilled life: they love, work, seek and find happiness, fight against injustice, laugh and cry. With access to Internet in huts under thatched roofs in rural areas and large businesses turning about huge capitals in major cities, controversial and dynamic Belarus is a melting pot of languages, cultures and religions; a country where people's regional identity is deeply rooted in history that goes back to the Great Duchy of Lithuania.

Down Among the Fishes revolves around the story of a woman named Alka, native of a small Belarusian village near the Polish border. Alka's unfulfilled desire to have a child turns her into an alcoholic and a drug addict. Then, a family tragedy turns her world upside down, forcing her out of the self-destructive cycle. Together with her twin sister, she sets out to examine the chain of events that led to her grandmother's unexpected death. Their inquiry quickly changes into a murder investigation. As the twins uncover new facts of the crime, more questions need to be answered. But will they? A rural intrigue continues to hold the villagers firm in its grasp until the very resolution.

Critics praised the novel's unusual form that successfully integrates features of several genres – drama, romance, adventure, fantasy and suspense – and a variety of authentic portraits of today's Belarusians.

About the author: Natalka Babina was born on May 15, 1966 in Belarus, close to the border with Poland and Ukraine, and graduated from Belarusian Institute of Technology in Minsk. Babina worked at the editorial departments of two Belarusian newspapers. Since 1994, she published her works in the independent newspaper Nasha Niva. Since 2006, she became a journalist at the same venue, also collaborating with other presses in Belarus and Ukraine. Natalka Babina authored a collection of stories The Blood should not be seen and a novel The Town of Fish, both translated into Ukrainian, Russian, Polish and Czech. Natalka became the laureate of the Cherkasova prize of Belarusian association of journalists in 2010.

Belarusian Dream Theater

Ensemble Free Theater Norway (EFTN) announces the playwrights who will participate in *Belarusian Dream Theater*, an international performing arts event supporting freedom of expression in Belarus conceived and initiated by Brendan McCall, Artistic Director of EFTN. On 25 March 2014, Belarus´ Freedom Day, partner theaters will present readings and/or performances of new short plays about Belarus *simultaneously* in Australia, Belarus, Canada, Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Ukraine, and the United States (California, New York, and Vermont).

Belarusian Dream Theater´s participating playwrights come from Australia, Austria, Belarus, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and their new short plays show a vast range of style, subject matter, and aesthetic. This year´s writers are: Morgan Bassichis, Manuel Borras, Jez Broome, Nancy Gall-Clayton, Vivienne Glance, Diane Rao Harman, Jacob Juntunen, John Ladd, Laura Lynn MacDonald, Rex McGregor, Daniel Michaelson, Cynthia Morrison, K. M. Mustatea, Martha Patterson, Alice Pencavel, Richard Pettifer, Anna J. Rogers, Jake Rosenberg, Nikolay Rudkovski, Aurin Squire, Zellie Thomas, Tatsiana Tuteishaya, Chris Van Strander, John Weagly, and David L. Williams.

The hope is that this coordinated cultural event will stimulate a greater knowledge and interest in Belarus by international audiences, journalists, and artists.

The impetus to create *Belarusian Dream Theater*´s originate in McCall´s personal and professional experiences. This includes his collaboration with Belarus Free Theatre in Minsk and Oslo in 2010, as well as volunteering with Amnesty International and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee to support greater freedom of expression in Belarus, particularly after 19 December 2010, when post-

election protests were brutally repressed. His 2011 article about these experiences published in *Contemporary Theatre Review* (UK), "When Theatre is ´Thoughtcrime´," won an international journalism award presented by the Solidarity with Belarus Information Office (Warsaw, Poland), and has since been translated and published in Belarusian. With *Belarusian Dream Theater,* McCall aims to achieve greater international focus on Belarus through dramatic writing and performance, similar to SBIO´s efforts in journalism. Further, he cites his past participation with *Shinsai: Theaters for Japan* (Theatre Communication Group and the Japan Playwrights Foundation) and NoPassport´s *Gun Control Theatre Action* as particularly inspiring in establishing precedent.

"This is a powerful example of how theater is more than just entertainment," says McCall. "All of these writers, actors, and directors are working for free. Hopefully, these new plays of *Belarusian Dream Theater* can inspire more people to take action, to create, and to speak up against censorship everywhere."

For further details contact:

Brendan McCall, Producer

brendan.mccall.norway@gmail.com

https://www.facebook.com/pages/Belarusian-Dream-Theater/477779698997372?ref=hl

HISTORICAL DATES

November 2 - Remembrance Day (Dziady)

. Since the Belarusian Declaration of Sovereignty in July, 1990, **Dziady** became an occasion for patriotic demonstrations emphasizing the victims and heroes of the historical past. Such observances were led by the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) and other groups and included marches to **Kurapaty**, a site near Minsk where mass executions took place during the Stalinist era.

November 1st through December 31, 1920
The Anti-Bolshevik Slucak Uprising

Anti-Bolshevik military action in the region of Slucak, organized by representatives of the Belarusan Democratic [National] Republic.

November 1830 through 1831

The national liberation uprising against the Russian empire and for the renewal of the *Recpaspalitaja (Republic) of Two Nations* (Poland and Litva)

November 3, 1882

The birthdate of **Jakub Kolas -** an outstanding Belarusian poet of the national renaissance era.

November 26, 1930

The birthdate of **Uladzimier Karatkievic -** a noted Belarusian writer of the Soviet era. Most of his works dealt with Belarus' history. Deceased in 1984

January 28, 1588

Third and final edition of the **Statute** (Collection of Laws) of the Grand Duchy of Litva was published and ratified. The Statute is a unique monument of the medieval Belarusian judicial thinking and literature.

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U.S.A. : BELARUSIAN REVIEW
P.O. Box 1347, Highland Park, NJ 08904
E-mail: **belarusianreview@hotmail.com**
OR **vitalonak@yahoo.com**
Tel: (001) 609 424 3126

Europe : BELARUSIAN REVIEW
Malesicka ul. 553/65
108 00 Praha 10, Czech Republic
E-mail: **jurka.stan@gmail.com**
OR **thepointjournal@gmail.com**
Tel: (420) 274 771 338, (420) 774 613 356

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